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Volume 87, No. 14 December 2008

The RING

Sign Of The Times

Bob Dylan's classic protest song "The Times They Are A-Changin'" was about the inevitability of change and how those who can't adjust are doomed to be left behind. Dylan was singing about social change, but it is a philosophy that can be applied to any walk of life, including boxing.

If you're looking for a sign of positive change in the Sweet Science, look no further than Tom Hogan's dramatic photo of the end of the Juan Manuel Marquez-Joel Casamayor world lightweight championship fight, on pages 72 and 73 of this issue. Look closely and you'll see that the new champ, his arms raised in triumph, is wearing THE RING logo on his trunks.

It is a scene you will see repeated on a regular basis as more and more fighters shed their alphabet straps in favor of fighting for THE RING championship belt. Before 2008 comes to a close, two more RING world championship bouts are scheduled: First, Joe Calzaghe will risk the light heavyweight crown against Roy Jones on November 8, and then junior welter champion Ricky Hatton will defend against Paul Malignaggi on November 22.

Until recently, Malignaggi held the IBF 140-pound title, but the IBF wanted him to fight a rematch with Herman Ngoudjo for a much smaller purse than he'll receive for fighting Hatton. Malignaggi could have requested an exception, but the IBF charges a non-refundable fee of $20,000, which does not guarantee an exception will be granted, so Malignaggi relinquished the alphabet strap to fight Hatton for the genuine championship. Best of all, it won't cost him a penny, as THE RING charges no sanction fees whatsoever.

Calzaghe also wants the freedom to guide his career without interference, and gave up his alphabet titles in favor of defending THE RING belt he won by beating former champion Bernard Hopkins—another example of how THE RING's policy of not interfering with champions' careers allows the market place, not alphabet organizations, to decide which fights are made.

THE RING also refuses to bend its rules, even when doing so would be popular. There are quite a few people who would like us to recognize the upcoming bout between Cristian Mijares-Vic Darchinyan for the vacant RING junior bantamweight title.

It's an outstanding match, one we look forward to with great anticipation. The problem is that although Mijares is our number-one contender, Darchinyan is number-four. The reason Darchinyan is not rated higher is simple: Both third-ranked Alexander Munoz and especially second-ranked Fernando Montiel have accomplished more at 115 pounds than Darchinyan.

Doing what is popular in some circles would not be fair to Montiel and Munoz, and fairness must come first in virtually all boxing matters. But when a match is made that fits the established criteria for filling the junior bantam vacancy, you can be sure the fighters will be wearing THE RING logo—the sign of true champions.

***

Welterweight Oscar Diaz has come out of the coma he lapsed into at the end of his July 16 bout with Delvin Rodriguez. Diaz still has a very long way to go, but doctors are cautiously optimistic about his recovery.

A few days after learning the heartening news about Diaz, I read that Arturo Gatti was working out in Montreal and considering a comeback.

Hey, Arturo, you have a perfect right to fight if you can meet the medical requirements, but you've already taken a lot more punishment than Diaz ever did. Maybe visiting Oscar, who is still hospitalized in San Antonio, will help you make the right decision.

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Opening Shot

Not A Man You Want To Tee Off!

It's not likely Muhammad Ali could offer much technical advice to some of the finest golfers in the world, but his presence alone had to have an impact on the U.S. team, which won the Ryder Cup for the first time since 1993. Phil Mickelson, greeting The Greatest at the Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky, called Ali's visit a memory he will always cherish.

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

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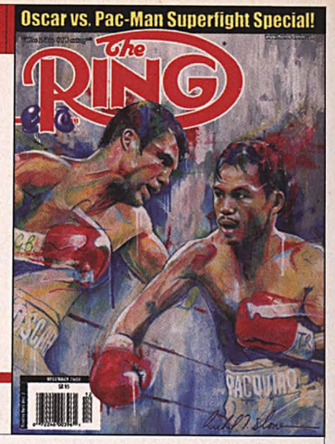

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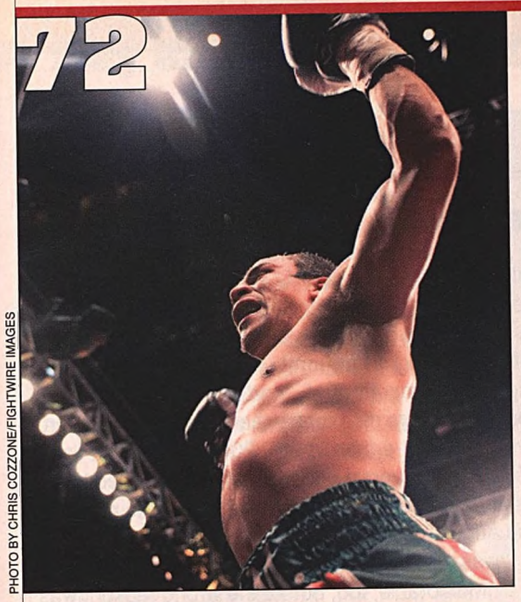

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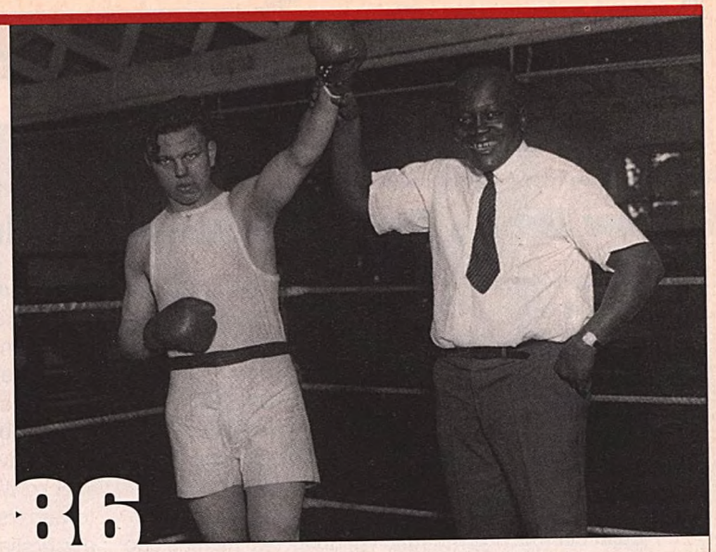

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

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New Honor For "The Drunken Master"

At 33 years old and with a record of 38-29-6 (20), it seems apparent that Emanuel Augustus will never be champion. That doesn't mean he hasn't left a big mark on the sport. In September, visitors to ESPN.com voted him *Friday Night Fights*' Most Memorable Fighter of the Decade.

"Augustus is one of the very few fighters who understands that, more than any other sport on earth, boxing is aligned with entertainment," said Joe Tessitore, *FNF*'s blow-by-blow man. "It's not just about wins and losses. It's about entertainment."

"I found out [I was in the running] about two months ago and it really caught me off-guard," Augustus told THE RING in mid-September. "It's a great honor and privilege. It's validation after all the things I've been through in boxing."

Augustus has fought frequently on *Friday Night Fights*, notably against Jaime Rangel, Marteze Logan, and Ray Oliveira, but never more memorably than against Micky Ward in their riveting punch-a-thon in July 2001. It was that fight, won by Ward by unanimous decision, which propelled Ward toward his brutal three-fight series with Arturo Gatti and also established Augustus as a must-see TV fighter. Significantly, it was also THE RING's Fight of the Year.

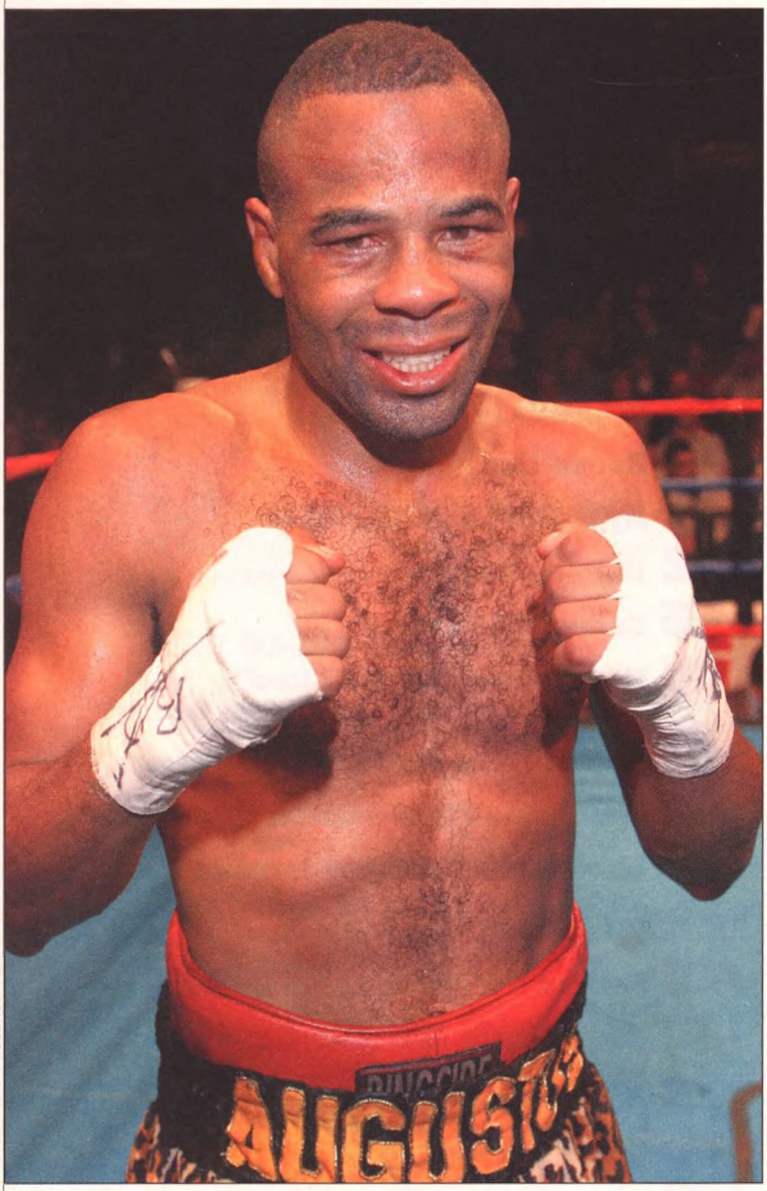


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Augustus: Friday Night Fights *fan favorite*

Memorable, too, but for the wrong reason, was Augustus' 10-round decision loss to Courtney Burton in Michigan in 2004. It was widely regarded as one of the worst decisions in recent years. Augustus got revenge two years later by stopping Burton in eight rounds in Oklahoma.

Not satisfied with being merely memorable, Augustus still hopes to be a champion, and toward that end recently relocated to Las Vegas and teamed up with trainer Roger Mayweather. Of his new partnership, he told THE RING, "It's going pretty good. It's only been about a month; I've got to get used to him. But everything's falling into place. There's nothing I can't do in the ring, and we're ready to show the world what I can do with Roger in my corner."

Augustus, who at this writing is riding a three-fight win-streak compiled in Australia, still has his sights set high. Having moved up to welterweight in order to obtain fights Down Under, he now wants to return to junior welter and fight Timothy Bradley, Ricky Hatton, and other top 140-pounders.

"My mindset now is to win," he said. "No more taking fights for $2,500 against guys who can damage my career. People wonder what a 33-year-old fighter can do. But I don't feel like I've lost anything. There are guys fighting in their 40s now. I don't want that to be me, because all those punches you take add up. I have a timetable of when I'll retire, whether I've won a title yet or not."

The odds are against him, of course; if he was going to win a title he probably would have by now. He should take comfort in knowing there are a many forgettable titleholders and champions out there. A belt around the waist is not the only measure of a fighter's success.

—William Dettloff

Joey Giardello, 1930-2008

I'll never forget the last time I saw Joey Giardello. It was at a memorial service for Jack McKinney, the best boxing writer to ever grace the pages of a Philadelphia newspaper. It was oppressively hot inside the church, so after about an hour I went outside to catch a breath of fresh air. Joey was standing on the steps sucking on a cigarette.

Not long afterward, a frail and sick-looking George Benton came out of the church, supported by a younger man at his elbow. Benton had won a unanimous decision over Giardello back in 1962, and as Benton gingerly made his way down the steps, Giardello glanced sideways at him and said, "I could beat you now."

Benton didn't respond, and I'm not even sure he heard the remark, but I did and couldn't help chuckling. Giardello hung up his gloves in '67, but the competitive juices that helped carry him to the middleweight championship of the world were still pumping through his veins in 2002. My guess is that he was trying to land the old one-two when the Grim Reaper put him down for the count on September 4.

Giardello was born in Brooklyn, but Philadelphia, where he lived throughout his career, claimed him early on. Joey was a perfect fit for the city's large Italian-American population, and he trained at the Passyunk Gym in the heart of South Philly.

Giardello turned pro in October 1948, and by '52 was topping the bill at Madison Square Garden. That first appearance at the Garden resulted in a 10-round decision over Billy Graham, but Giardello had to go to court in order to have the result listed in the win column. Although he had prevailed via split decision on the official scorecards, New York commissioners Robert Christenberry and C. B. Powell altered the scorecard of judge Joe Agnello at ringside, making Graham the winner. Giardello sued, and the New York State Supreme Court reversed the reversal the following February.

Giardello beat a passel of good fighters, including Gil Turner, Joey Giambra, Joe Shaw, Tuzo Portuguez, Tiger Jones, Chico Vejar, Holley Mims, Henry Hank (in THE RING's 1962 Fight of the Year), and a washed-up Ray Robinson. But due mainly to his less-than-Spartan work ethic, he also lost his share, going down to defeat against Johnny Saxton, Terry Downes, Spider Webb, Rocky Castellani, and Bobby Dykes, among others.

"I was a natural," he told *Sports Illustrated* in 1998. "I wouldn't train. I just fought."

In April 1960, Giardello finally got a long overdue title shot, only to come up empty-handed when his foul-filled brawl with Gene Fullmer was ruled a draw.

PHOTO BY JACK TINNEY

Giardello and Robinson trade love taps

Giardello also went 2-2 in a four-fight series with Dick Tiger. In their third bout, December 7, 1963, Joey won the middleweight championship via 15-round decision at the age of 33. He made his only successful defense, a close decision over Ruben "Hurricane" Carter in December '64, before Tiger regained the title in October '65.

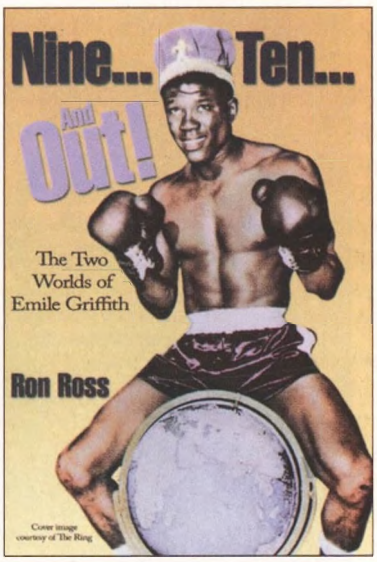
The ex-champ went 2-2 in his next four bouts and retired with a 101-25-7 (33) with 1 no-contest record following a 10-round decision over Jack Rodgers on November 6, 1976. But there was still one more significant victory to come.

When the 1999 movie *The Hurricane* depicted the decision over Carter as a racially tinged robbery, Giardello, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1993, sued Universal Pictures and Beacon Communications in federal court for defamation, and eventually accepted an out-of-court settlement.

—Nigel Collins

Boxing Bookshelf Holiday Special

If a biographer's task is to give readers a greater understanding of his subject, then Ron Ross has done a highly commendable job with his new book, *Nine ... Ten ... And Out! The Two Different Worlds Of Emile Griffith* (DiBella Entertainment, 258 pages, hardbound: $28.95, paperback: $16.95). One comes away from it with admiration and compassion for Griffith, a Hall of Fame fighter and wonderful human being who has been haunted throughout most of his adult life by the twin burden of killing a man in the ring and living a double life outside of the ropes.



On March 24, 1962, millions watched on TV as Griffith administered a fatal beating to Benny "Kid" Paret, but Emile was always alone when the specter of Paret appeared to him again and again over the coming decades.

It also took more than 40 years before Griffith went public with his bisexuality, a not-so-closely-guarded secret that became eternally entwined with the Paret tragedy when Benny challenged Griffith's masculinity at the weigh-in by calling him a "*maricon*," Spanish street slang for "faggot."

Ross handles both of these sensitive topics with grace and understanding, but it is Griffith who succinctly sums up his bedeviling dilemma when he says, "I killed a man and most people understand and forgive me. However, I love a man, and to so many people this is an unforgivable sin; this makes me an evil person. So even though I never went to jail, I've been in prison almost all my life."

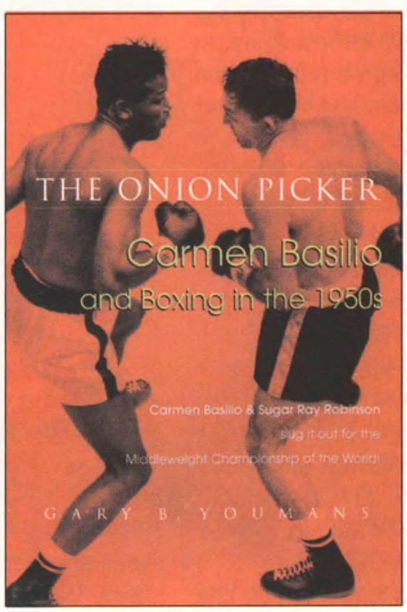
Although he has never completely shed the double whammy that caused so much pain, Griffith did gain a measure of closure when he met (and was forgiven) by Paret's son, Benny Jr., during the filming of the superb documentary *Ring Of Fire*. The two-division former world champion has also come to grips with his sexuality and is vice president of Stonewall Veterans Association, a pioneering gay rights organization.

My only quibble with Ross' otherwise outstanding book is that it would have benefited from a tighter edit, but that aside, it comes highly recommended to all who relish a biography that goes beyond the obvious and peers into the soul of its subject in search of a larger truth.

—Nigel Collins

The Onion Picker: Carmen Basilio And Boxing In The 1950s (Campbell Road Press North, 212 pages, hardcover, $24.95) is a neatly packaged little book about one of boxing's most memorable champions. Those looking for an in-depth biography of Basilio, however, may come away disappointed.

Written by Gary Youmans, a sports marketing consultant from Syracuse, *The Onion Picker* certainly feels like a labor of love, but it's typical of the many self-published boxing titles that have come out in recent years. It's lightweight, unpolished, and relies heavily on anecdotes taken from old sources. It's also the sort of book you'd expect from someone with a marketing background—Youmans is content to sell us Basilio's craggy surface without touching on anything deeper. That the book ends abruptly with Basilio's final bout without even a mention of his life between 1961 and now is indicative of the book's many shortcomings.



Even the cover of the book falls short. Basilio had one of the all-time great faces in boxing, but instead of a face shot adorning the cover, we get a pink-hued shot of Basilio and Ray Robinson.

The book was written with Basilio's cooperation—a brief but uninteresting interview with Basilio appears at the book's end—but it's hard to believe Basilio wanted to share the book's cover with Robinson, for whom he never cared.

The photographs inside the book, however, many of which are from Basilio's personal collection, are excellent. The old AP photos of Basilio's fights prove that boxing was often best served by black and white photography.

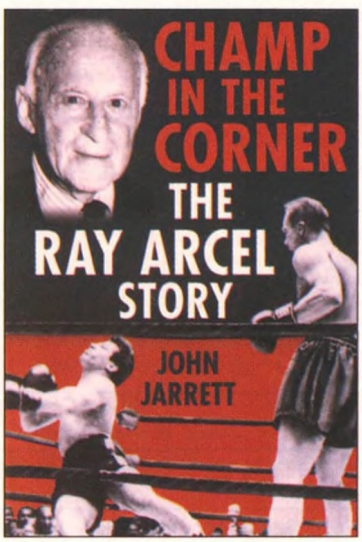
One photo in particular stands out: Johnny Saxton is flat on his back, and Basilio is walking away, his head down, moments from reclaiming the welterweight crown he'd lost by dubious decision a few months earlier. Winning the title the first time had been the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. This time, though, there is no joy on Basilio's face. Regaining the championship from Saxton just seems like work.

Basilio deserved a better book than this, but in an era where publishers are hesitant to touch boxing, maybe *The Onion Picker* is the best we could hope for. Youman's book isn't terrible, but unless you're the type who needs to hear about Basilio's toughness from 100 different sources, skip it.

—Don Stradley

A trainer of 22 world champions, the legendary Ray Arcel was a man who possessed an understated passion for his trade, along with undeniable genius. What made those qualities so much more admirable was the way in which Arcel was known for carrying himself with unwavering dignity and professionalism throughout his career.

In an obituary for *The New York Times*, the late-Phil Berger wrote that Arcel, who died in 1994 at age 92, was an anomaly in the fight game: "He was unfailingly courteous and well-spoken and carried himself as though an attaché case rather than a corner man's satchel belonged in his hands."



Beginning with Abe Goldstein in the 1920s, the parade of champions Arcel trained reads like a Who's Who of the sport's most celebrated fighters, among them: Barney Ross, Tony Zale, Benny Leonard, Jackie "Kid" Berg, and Roberto Duran. Remarkably, Arcel worked his last corner at age 82, helping Larry Holmes negotiate a knockout of Gerry Cooney.

Boxing historian John Jarrett, author of *Champ In The Corner: The Ray Arcel Story* (Tempus Publishing, £18.99, hardcover, 224 pages), certainly deserves kudos for recognizing the merit in producing an Arcel biography. And it's evident that Jarrett worked hard to cobble together a variety of sources on Arcel, however scarce.

It's regrettable, however, that Jarrett fails to put together a cohesive portrait of the great man. Rather than employing his own seamless narrative, the author often draws on liberal quotes from a variety of articles and books, such as Peter Heller's *In This Corner*, or Ronald K. Fried's *Corner Men*. To compensate for gaps in Arcel's story, the author elects to fill pages with mini-biographies of the fighters Arcel worked with, and, ironically, it is in those segments that Jarrett is at his best as a writer.

Unfortunately, we don't get enough Arcel in a book that is supposed to be about Arcel. Some passages, such as the work he did with Teddy Yarosz to rehabilitate the fighter's injured knee, shed light on the Arcel's compassion and commitment to his fighters. But certain well-known episodes in Arcel's career, such as his troubles with the mob-backed International Boxing Club and his work with Duran, for example, each garner only brief chapters toward the end of the book.

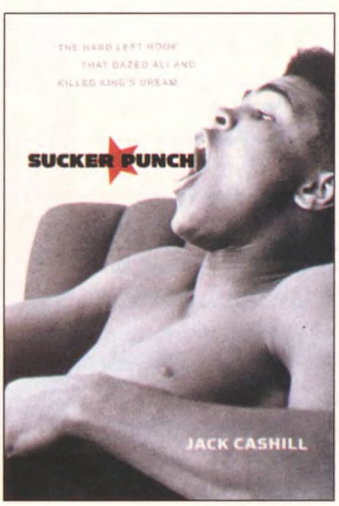
It is truly a shame that Arcel never found the time to write an autobiography. Such a book, like Arcel himself, would have been a true gift to the sport.

—Paul Salgado

When a man lies about his past, is known for having dalliances with teenage girls, and aligns himself with a murderous hate group that cheered when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, does he deserve to be called a hero? Can a man who happily posed for photos alongside sadistic dictators be considered a good American?

These questions are at the heart of *Sucker Punch: The Hard Left Hook That Dazed Ali And Killed King's Dream* (Nelson Current, 304 pages, hardcover, $24.99), a book written by Frank Cashill to explore Muhammad Ali's relationship with the Nation of Islam.

By culling through the mountains of available literature—according to Amazon.com, books on Ali are well into triple digits—Cashill weaves every unflattering moment of Ali's life into a bleak tapestry. Cashill depicts Ali as an insecure, clueless man who became a powerful symbol of the1960s' civil unrest only because of the leftist media. How can Ali represent anything, Cashill ponders, when he was merely a puppet for Elijah Muhammad?



Sucker Punch also focuses on Ali's portrayal of himself as a poor black child subject to racist indignities, when he was actually comfortable by the standards of the day. In fact, Ali was coddled through high school like any pampered jock. Tweaking a story for the sake of autobiography is not so unusual, but Cashill's point is that Ali's embellishments played into the Nation of Islam's hateful agenda.

Cashill's depictions of Ali reminds us of a suburban kid who hears his first punk rock CD and decides to become a skinhead. Like those impressionable children, Ali was a bit naive, lonely perhaps, and he was impressed by power. At times, it's as if Cashill wants Ali to hold a press conference and say, "Sorry I was a Black Muslim, folks. It was just a youthful folly. Please forgive me, okay?"

Cashill even suggests Ali was a Republican at heart, evidenced by Ali's open support of Ronald Reagan and George Bush during the 1980s. Cashill scolds the left wing media for ignoring this aspect of Ali's metamorphosis.

Cashill's book is intriguing, especially when he's dismantling Ali's ghosted autobiography *The Greatest*. But by dealing solely with previously published material, *Sucker Punch* feels as if it's written from a safe distance. Ali supporters have dismissed Cashill as a conservative crank with an axe to grind, and there are certain chapters that read that way. Still, if Mark Kram's *Ghosts Of Manila* didn't completely readjust Ali's image for you, *Sucker Punch* is a fair followup.

—Don Stradley

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
8/22/08	Irving Garcia Tech. Draw 2 Hector Munoz *Duo combines to land more headbutts than punches*	Telefutura	w	C	C+	C-
8/22/08	Daniel Jimenez W 10 Shamir Reyes *Jimenez back on winning track after consecutive loses*	Telefutura	l	C	C+	C+
8/22/08	Harry Yorgey W 12 Jason LeHoullier *Yorgey establishes himself as king of East Coast clubfighters*	ESPN2	jm	C+	B+	C
8/22/08	Fernando Beltran W 12 Takalani Ndlovu *Late-round sweep edges Beltran past solid South African*	ESPN2	f	B+	B+	C+
8/29/08	Rudy Cisneros W 8 Latif Mundy *Not often that a good prospect loses a close fight on home turf*	Telefutura	jm	C-	B+	B
8/29/08	Mike Jones KO 6 Juliano Ramos *Brazilian import not a hard nut to crack*	Telefutura	w	C	C+	C
8/29/08	Matt Remillard KO 4 Adauto Gonzalez *Bodyshot sinks ambitious last-minute replacement*	ESPN2	f	C+	C	C+
8/29/08	Matt Godfrey KO 4 Emmanuel Nwodo *Godfrey scores bloody kayo after suffering an early knockdown*	ESPN2	c	B+	A-	B+
8/30/08	Euri Gonzalez KO 2 Edwin Vazquez *Two knockdowns and a kind referee end this mismatch early*	PPV	w	B-	C	C
8/30/08	Eric Morel W 12 Heriberto Ruiz *Shouldn't a guy nicknamed "Little Hands Of Steel" try to score a kayo?*	PPV	b	B	B-	C
8/30/08	Roman Martinez KO 6 Santos Benavides *"Rocky" lives up to his nickname; climbs off the canvas for a kayo win*	PPV	jl	B-	B	B
8/30/08	**Ivan Calderon Tech. Win 7 Hugo Cazares** ***Getting cut is the only way Calderon will win a fight inside the distance***	**PPV**	**jfl**	**A-**	**A-**	**C+**
9/05/08	Joaquin Zamora KO 3 Ray Sanchez *Purposeful answer to doctor's question saves Sanchez from clean kayo*	Telefutura	jm	C	B-	B-
9/05/08	Urbano Antillon KO 4 Daniel Attah *Antillon ready for a title shot*	Telefutura	jl	B-	C+	B
9/05/08	Yonnhy Perez KO 6 David Martinez *Another in a long line* ShoBox *prospects on his way to a title?*	Showtime	l	B-	C+	B
9/05/08	Antonio DeMarco W 10 Jose Reyes *Late rally by Reyes not enough to overcome early knockdowns*	Showtime	l	B-	C+	B
9/05/08	Rolando Reyes W 10 Ivan Valle *Capable Reyes stays busy and under the radar*	ESPN2	l	B-	C+	C+
9/05/08	James Kirkland KO 2 Ricardo Cortes *Referee deprives Kirkland and fans of coup de grâce*	ESPN2	jm	B-	C	C
9/06/08	Rocky Juarez KO 10 Jorge Barrios *Barrios won't be giving opponents any more lip!*	HBO	jl	B+	A-	B+
9/06/08	Juan Diaz W 12 Michael Katsidis *Diaz' jab is not the best in boxing, just the most effective*	HBO	l	A-	A-	B
9/12/08	Rock Allen W 8 Gilbert Vera *If this Rock fought more he might be a gem*	Telefutura	w	C	C	C
9/12/08	Lucas Matthysse ND 3 Rogelio Castaneda *Kayo artist's head gets in the way of his fists*	Telefutura	jw	B-	C+	D
9/13/08	Timothy Bradley W 12 Edner Cherry *Will Bradley's sharp skills remain hidden behind a dull persona?*	Showtime	jw	A-	C+	C+
9/13/08	Victor Ortiz KO 5 Roberto Arrieta *Ortiz' kayo percentage rises with the level of his opposition*	PPV	jw	B-	C	C+
9/13/08	Danny Perez W 10 Julio Garcia *At least Garcia wasn't outworked by a 40-year-old this time*	PPV	sm	B-	C+	C+
9/13/08	Vernon Forrest W 12 Sergio Mora *Can we go back to underestimating Mora again?*	PPV	jm	A-	C+	C+
9/13/08	**Juan Manuel Marquez KO 11 Joel Casamayor** ***Marquez wins The Ring belt and likely entrance to the Hall of Fame***	**PPV**	**l**	**A**	**A**	**B+**

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(Ring championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Death Of A Gentleman

A witness claims the August 11 shooting death of 1996 Olympic bronze medalist Rhoshii Wells was over a woman, but the man who pulled the trigger claims it was done in self-defense.

Suspect Roger Randolph confessed to the killing, but said Wells had punched him and robbed him of $100.

Those close to Wells say Randolph's story is unlikely.

"Rhoshii Wells was a gentleman," said trainer Al Mitchell, who coached Wells during the '96 Olympics. "Anybody around him knows he didn't cuss or anything. He's not a person who would pick on somebody. The way I heard it, the other guy was picking on a woman, and Rhoshii asked him to stop."

According to the arrest report, the two men were overheard near the northern Las Vegas apartment complex where Wells resided. After arguing over comments made to a woman, Randolph left the area in his car, but immediately returned with a weapon and fired three shots at Wells. Wells' four-year-old son, Prince, hurled himself on top of Wells as the fighter lay bleeding.

Wells died hours after emergency medical crews took him to University Medical Center.

Two days after the fatal shooting, Randolph, 26, was arrested at the Nevada-Arizona border. Randolph lived several blocks from Wells, and maintained that Wells had threatened to kill him.

Wells, a 31-year-old father of six children, had not fought since 2005, but was hoping to return to boxing. "He was an outstanding athlete," said Mitchell.

Nicknamed "The Great One," Wells was once considered a hot prospect, good enough to be on the same U.S. team as Floyd Mayweather and Fernando Vargas. Evander Holyfield had helped pay for Wells' training expenses leading up the Olympics, and gave Wells' family $10,000 to help them relocate from Texas to Las Vegas when Wells began his professional career.

Wells, 18-2-2 (10), was a quick-handed junior middleweight, but seemed to lose focus after two losses to Alejandro Garcia. He auditioned for the 2007 season of television's *The Contender*, but according to the show's executive producer, Sugar Ray Leonard, Wells wasn't accepted because he was "rusty."

Financial troubles had forced Wells to move into his girlfriend's apartment near the scene of the killing. Just one day before his death, Wells had commented to his father that he didn't like the neighborhood and was planning to move again.

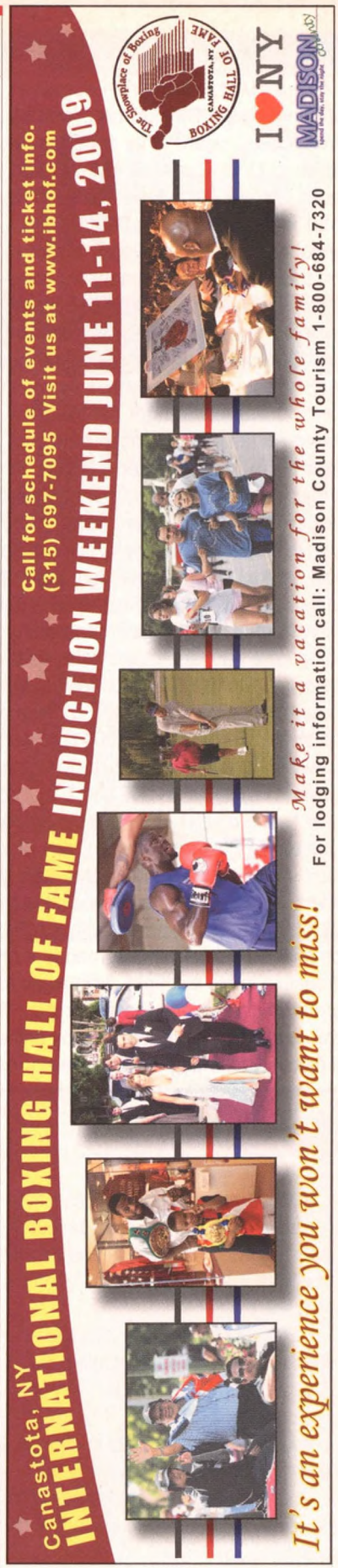
A week after Wells' murder, a non-violence rally was held at the Vera Johnson Apartments on North Lamb Boulevard where Wells had lived. The rally was organized by the Valley United Initiative, an outgrowth of the Safe Village Initiative formed two years ago in response to local gun violence. Police officers and several members of the community attended.

"Everybody should learn from this," said Mitchell. "Use your time well on this earth because you can go at any time."

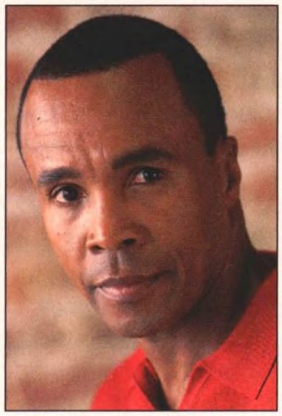
—Don Stradley

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Wells celebrates 1996 victory over Ronald Simms



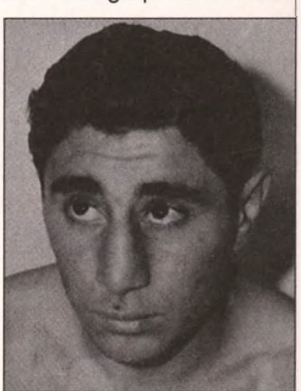
Outside the Ropes



Leonard: Living legend

The Jim Murray Memorial Foundation will honor **Sugar Ray Leonard** with its "Great Ones" award at its 10th annual Tribute to Living Legends of Sport and Media, October 30, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California ... Former heavyweight contender **Joe Mesi** won the Democratic primary for New York State Senate by winning 53 percent of the vote compared to 35 percent and 12 percent for his two opponents. Mesi faces off in November against a Republican challenger for the 61st District State seat ... British promoter **Frank Warren** has accepted £115,000 in damages plus his legal costs from publisher Random House. The lawsuit resulted from defamatory allegations made against Warren in the book *Ricky Hatton: The Hitman, My Story*, written by **Niall Hickman** and published by Random House ... **Floyd Mayweather** had $7.2-million worth of jewelry stolen from his Las Vegas home on August 17. Police say two or more burglars invaded Mayweather's home while he was away. The retired fighter has posted a $100,000 reward for information about the theft ... Promoter **Chris A. Webb**, who staged **Mike Tyson**'s 2004 fight with **Danny Williams** in Louisville, Kentucky, plead guilty to failing to report more than $1-million in income in 2000 and '01 ... Scottish featherweight **Scott Harrison**, 31, has been sentenced to 10 months in prison by Glasgow Sheriff Court after pleading guilty to drunk-driving and assault charges ... Middleweight **Joey Gilbert**, 31, agreed to pay a $10,000 fine for a positive steroid test as part of a settlement with the Nevada State Athletic Commission. Gilbert also agreed to a one-year suspension retroactive to his last fight, which was nearly a year ago ... Former middleweight contender **Alex Ramos**, 47, is back home undergoing physical therapy and expected to make a full recovery following a massive seizure that doctors believe was probably triggered by an asthma attack. Ramos, a major player in the Retired Boxers Foundation, was discovered unconscious in his apartment in late-August and rushed to the hospital. ... Former featherweight contender **Paul Jorgensen**, 74, died on August 6 in Port Arthur, Texas. Born in Tallulah, Louisiana, Jorgensen, spent most of his life in Texas, where he became a popular attraction after turning pro in April 1953. He won the Texas featherweight title in 1955 and went on to compile 82-8-4 (36) record, his final bout coming in September 1960. In his lone world title fight, Jorgensen lost a 15-round decision to **Harold Gomes** for the vacant junior lightweight title, despite scoring four knockdowns. After boxing, Jorgensen became a successful businessman and own a beer distribution company ... Amateur boxing coach **Steve Smith**, 56, died of kidney cancer on August 12 in his native Seattle, Washington. Smith worked with the 1992 and '96 U.S. Olympic boxing teams ... **Jabir Herbert Muhammad**, 79, died following heart surgery at the University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago. Muhammad, the son of the late Nation of Islam leader **Elijah Muhammad**, managed the boxing career of **Muhammad Ali** from 1966 to 1981, and his postfight career until '91. In 1993, Ali sued Muhammad, alleging that a foundation used the boxer's name improperly, using his signature in fundraising letters and other work intended to promote Islamic causes. The lawsuit was settled the next year when the foundation changed its name. "I think he genuinely cared about Ali," said Ali biographer **Thomas Hauser**. "But he was also interested in making money for himself." ... Former world bantamweight champion **Vic Toweel**, 80, died on August 15 in Sydney, Australia. Toweel became the first South African to win a world title when he outpointed **Manuel Ortiz** on May 31, 1950, in Johannesburg. A relentless attacker, Towell was sometimes called the "White Henry Armstrong" because of his ability to throw punches non-stop without tiring. He made three successful defenses of the title, including a TKO of **Danny O'Sullivan**, who was knocked down a record-setting 14 times before the bout was stopped in the 10th round. Toweel lost the title to **Jimmy Carruthers** in November '52, retired a year later with a career record of 28-3-1 (14), and moved to Australia in the 1980s.

Jorgensen: Dead at age 74



Toweel: Bantam champ dies

Quotable

"Believe me, the true Mexican fans are going to be on Manny Pacquiao's side. Because you know what, Oscar's never been accepted by the true Mexican fans from Mexico. Mexican-Americans yes, but not Mexicans."

—Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, discussing rooting interests in the upcoming De La Hoya-Pacquiao "Dream Match"

"I'm too long in the tooth to change, but you're never too long in the tooth to learn."

—Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, talking about how new trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. will affect his fighting style

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended September 22, 2008

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: No changes.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior Middleweights: Vernon Forrest (fourth last issue) surges to the number-one slot with his victory over Sergio Mora (second last issue), who drops to five. Verno Phillips slips from one to two and Cory Spinks advances from five to four.
Welterweights: Isaac Hlatswayo enters at eight, replacing Jackson Bonsu, who exits after suffering an upset defeat to unrated Rafal Jackiewicz.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: Big shakeup: Juan Manuel Marquez replaces Joel Casamayor as world champion, and Casamayor descends to four, which pushed down David Diaz from four to five. Antonio Pitalua debuts at seven, after stopping Jose Santa Cruz (fifth last issue), who exits. Michael Katsidis drops from seven to eight after losing to third-ranked Juan Diaz. Amir Khan (eighth last issue) departs after suffering a first-round knockout loss to unrated Breidis Prescott. Ali Funeka (10th last issue) switches with Yuri Romanov (ninth last issue).
Junior Lightweights: Marquez (first last issue) is now lightweight champ. Joan Guzman (second last issue) departs because he can no longer make weight. This advances Edwin Valero (third last issue) all the way to one, and Humberto Soto (fourth last issue) to two. Rocky Juarez (10th last issue) leaps to three after stopping Jorge Barrios (fifth last issue), who falls to eight. Yodsanan Nanthachai (seventh last issue), Cassius Baloyi (eighth last issue), and Mzonke Fana (ninth last issue) each move up three places. Nicky Cook debuts at seven, after beating Alex Arthur (sixth last issue). Urbano Antillon and Roman Martinez enter the ratings at nine and 10, respectively.
Featherweights: Nicky Cook (eighth last issue) exits to compete at junior lightweight, moving Takahiro Aoh (ninth last issue) and Orlando Salido (10th last issue) up one place each, and making room for Choi Tse-veenpurev to debut at 10.
Junior Featherweights: Takalani Ndlovu (seventh last issue) exits after losing two of his last three fights, moving up Daniel Ponce De Leon (eighth last issue) and Rey Bautista (ninth last issue) one place each. Ricardo Cordoba enters at nine.
Bantamweights: Roberto Vasquez jumps two weight classes to enter at nine. Vusi Malinga (10th last issue) moves up to eight, and Luis Perez falls from eight to 10, after suffering a decision loss to number-nine rated junior featherweight Ricardo Cordoba.
Junior Bantamweights: Kohei Kono debuts at 10, replacing Rafael Concepcion (10th last issue), who was stopped by sixth-rated Jorge Arce.
Flyweights: Roberto Vasquez (sixth last issue) moves to campaign at bantamweight. Vasquez' departure moves everyone from seven to 10 up one slot, making room for Moruti Mthalane to debut at 10.
Junior Flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: Roman Gonzalez vaults to the number-one spot after stopping Yutaka Niida (first last issue), who falls to three. Everyone from three to nine moves down one slot, nudging out Nkosinathi Joyi at 10 from the ratings.
Pound-for-pound: Juan Manuel Marquez (third last issue) switches places with Joe Calzaghe (second last issue), on the strength of his emphatic knockout of Joel Casamayor to win the lightweight championship.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Lightweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight/
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Antonio Margarito**
   Welterweight
7. **Kelly Pavlik**
   Middleweight
8. **Cristian Mijares**
   Junior Bantamweight
9. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
10. **Miguel Cotto**
    Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

[The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended September 22, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

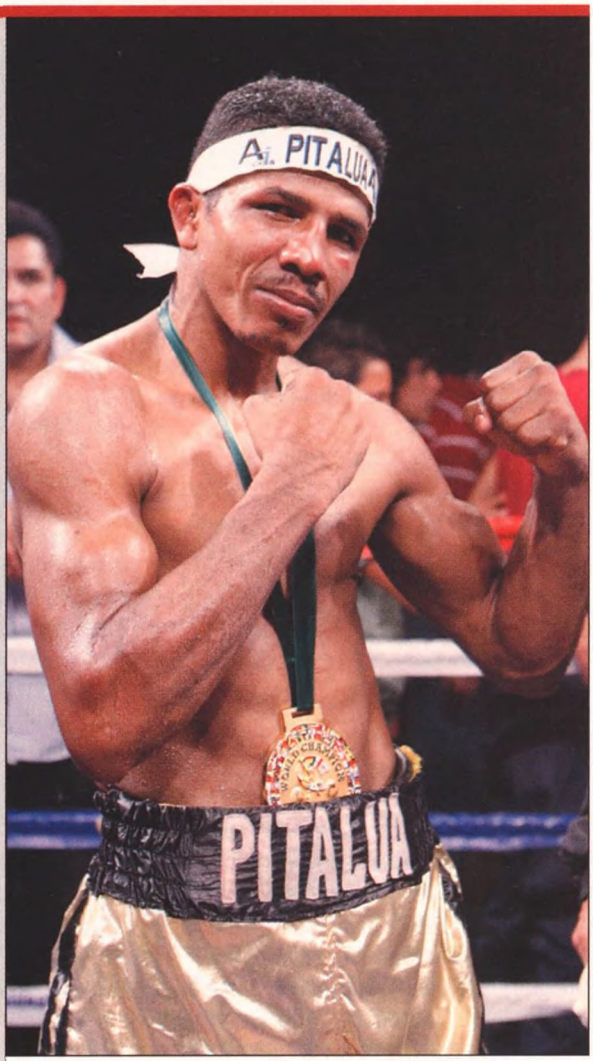


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Lightweight Antonio Pitalua debuts in the ratings after stopping Jose Santa Cruz

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 51-3 (45)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Nigeria 30-1 (23)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 49-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 16-0 (12)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Kazakhstan 35-6 (26)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)
10. **CHRIS ARREOLA** Riverside, CA 24-0 (21)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 41-3 (29)
2. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Belize 42-10-1 (21)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 39-5 (30)
4. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
5. **SERGIO MORA** Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
6. **ALEX BUNEMA** Dominican Republic 30-5-2 (16)
7. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 32-3-1 (23)
8. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Haiti 30-1 (19)
9. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Ukraine 35-0 (22)
10. **JOEL JULIO** Colombia 34-1 (31)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
2. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 36-1-2 (26)
3. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 35-1-1 (15)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-2 (19)
5. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO** Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
8. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-0-1 (8)
9. **ORLANDO SALIDO** Mexico 31-9-2 (20)
10. **CHOI TSEVEENPUREV** Mongolia 27-4 (19)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 30-2 (21)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 22-0 (20)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 28-0 (11)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 35-1 (25
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 32-1 (17)
7. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-2 (30)
8. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 26-1 (19)
9. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 34-1-2 (21)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 39-6 (33)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 24-2 (8)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 23-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-1-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 22-2 (18)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
7. **ABNER MARES** Mexico 17-0 (10)
8. **VUSI MALINGA** South Africa 18-2-1 (11)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ** Panama 27-2 (20)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-3 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
   Poland 35-1 (24)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   Guadeloupe 33-4 (22)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
   Poland 41-2 (31)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
   Germany 29-3-1 (18)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Jamaica 26-3-1 (24)
7. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
   Wales 28-2 (21)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
   Yugoslavia 22-1 (17)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV**
   Russia 24-1-1 (17)
10. **RUDOLF KRAJ**
    Czech Republic 14-0 (10)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 48-5-1 (32)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 27-4 (19)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
   New Haven, CT 26-0 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Jamaica 47-12-2 (32)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
   Romania 25-0 (15
9. **CHRIS HENRY**
   Houston, TX 22-1 (18)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
    Argentina 31-3 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
   Denmark 40-1 (30)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 33-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
   Romania 22-0 (18)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
   Mexico 27-1 (21)
5. **JEFF LACY**
   St. Petersburg, FL 24-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH**
   England 23-0 (19)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
   Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
   Cameroon 26-3-2 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
   Russia 33-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
    Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 34-0 (30)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
   Armenia 27-0 (22)
2. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 30-2-1 (13)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
   Germany 29-2 (14)
4. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
   Finland 25-1 (17)
5. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
   Louisville, KY 24-2-3 (12)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
   Spain 62-8 (43)
7. **DAVID LOPEZ**
   Mexico 36-12 (23)
8. **RAUL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico 41-3-1 (29)
9. **JAMES McGIRT JR.**
   Vero Beach, FL 19-1 (9)
10. **MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO**
    Mexico 42-4-1 (37)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 37-5 (27)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
   Augusta, GA 34-1 (25)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 32-1 (26)
4. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
5. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Ghana 35-2 (20)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
   Puerto Rico 25-2 (19)
7. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 36-6 (25)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
   Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
   South Africa 28-1 (10)
10. **ANDRE BERTO**
    Winter Haven, FL 22-0 (19)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 44-1 (31)

1. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
   Brooklyn, NY 25-1 (5)
2. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 23-0 (11)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
   England 36-2-2 (21)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Ukraine 30-2-1 (13)
5. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
   Cameroon 17-2 (9)
6. **KENDALL HOLT**
   Paterson, NJ 24-2 (13)
7. **RICARDO TORRES**
   Colombia 32-2 (28)
8. **JUAN URANGO**
   Colombia 20-1-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   South Africa 46-10-1 (31)
10. **JUAN LAZCANO**
    Mexico 37-5-1 (27)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 49-4-1 (36)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL**
   Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines 47-3-2 (35)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
   Houston, TX 34-1 (17)
4. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
5. **DAVID DIAZ**
   Chicago, IL 34-2-1 (17)
6. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Mexico 35-4 (26)
7. **ANTONIO PITALUA**
   Mexico 46-3 (40)
8. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 23-2 (20)
9. **ALI FUNEKA**
   South Africa 30-1-2 (25)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
    Belarus 21-2 (14)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **EDWIN VALERO**
   Venezuela 24-0 (24)
2. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 44-7-2 (28)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
   Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
4. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 56-3-1 (45)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 36-3-1 (19)
6. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 28-4 (11)
7. **NICKY COOK**
   England 29-1(16)
8. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
9. **URBANO ANTILLON**
   Mexico 24-0 (17)
10. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
    Puerto Rico 20-0-1 (12)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
   Mexico 36-3-2 (15)
2. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 37-3-1 (28)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 32-3 (27)
4. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia 30-1-1 (24)
5. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 12-1 (7)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 50-4-1 (38)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
   Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **Z GORRES**
   Philippines 28-2-2 (15)
9. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
   Russia 29-4-1 (9)
10. **KOHEI KONO**
    Japan 21-4 (7)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 33-2-3 (21)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 67-3-1 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 33-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 28-0-2 (17)
6. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 44-1-1 (18)
7. **JOSE LOPEZ**
   Puerto Rico 37-7-2 (31)
8. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 19-0 (12)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico 26-5-1 (19)
10. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
    South Africa 22-1 (15)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 32-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 27-1-2 (20)
2. **CESAR CANCHILA**
   Colombia 27-1 (21)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
   Mexico 19-1-1 (15)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 32-5 (17)
5. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
   Philippines 46-10-7 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 25-3-1 (11)
7. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
8. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
9. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
   France 23-2 (9)
10. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
    Argentina 18-1 (9)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   Nicaragua 21-0 (19)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico 24-0-1 (15)
3. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan 23-2-3 (9)
4. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 27-0 (11)
5. **EAGLE KYOWA**
   Thailand 18-2 (6)
6. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 22-4-1 (20)
7. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 62-6-5 (31)
8. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 22-3 (9)
9. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 23-1-3 (14)
10. **JUAN PALACIOS**
    Nicaragua 24-2 (19)

By Jeff Ryan

Process Of Elimination

Reports that the International Olympic Committee will be eliminating baseball and softball from the competition in London in 2012 surely didn't create much consternation in the living rooms of America. That's because, let's be honest, most people who watched NBC's telecast of the Beijing Games probably didn't know there even was a baseball or softball tournament. Or, for that matter, *any* other Olympic sports besides swimming, diving, basketball, gymnastics, and beach volleyball.

Is it just me? Or are you, too, not surprised that Michael Phelps could swim so fast with all the rocket-powered smoke the media was blowing up his ass? Have you, like me, concluded that you don't want to ever again hear about Misty May unless the weather forecaster is telling us to expect a rainy spring? And do you find yourself wondering why, if they're not doing something unnatural to their bodies during training, so many teenage gymnasts sound like Minnie Mouse sucking on a helium balloon when they speak?

Well, for those of us with an interest in boxing, it was particularly frustrating tuning in to the action in Beijing. Predictably, our buddies at NBC did another great job of hiding the bouts, so much so that you would have thought they were illegal dogfights being shielded from the ASPCA. To secure a juicy time slot, one assumes, an Olympic boxer would have needed to have a reputation for, of all things, taking dives.

"Hey, did you say he's a *diver*?" you could just imagine one NBC executive asking another. "Get that kid in here. We'll put him on in prime time!"

After playing detective and eventually tracking down much of the fistic action, it soon became apparent that NBC was actually doing us all a favor with its stealth coverage. The boxing competition in Beijing drove home a point with all of the force of a Joe Louis jab: Olympic boxing sucks. As a matter of fact, consider this an appeal to the IOC to have boxing eliminated from the calendar of events before they light the torch in merry old England four years hence. Fill in the gap in the broadcast schedule with extra archery coverage if you must.

The biggest problem with Olympic boxing is that it bears about as much resemblance to pro boxing (my true love) as pro wrestling does to amateur grappling. My first complaint is

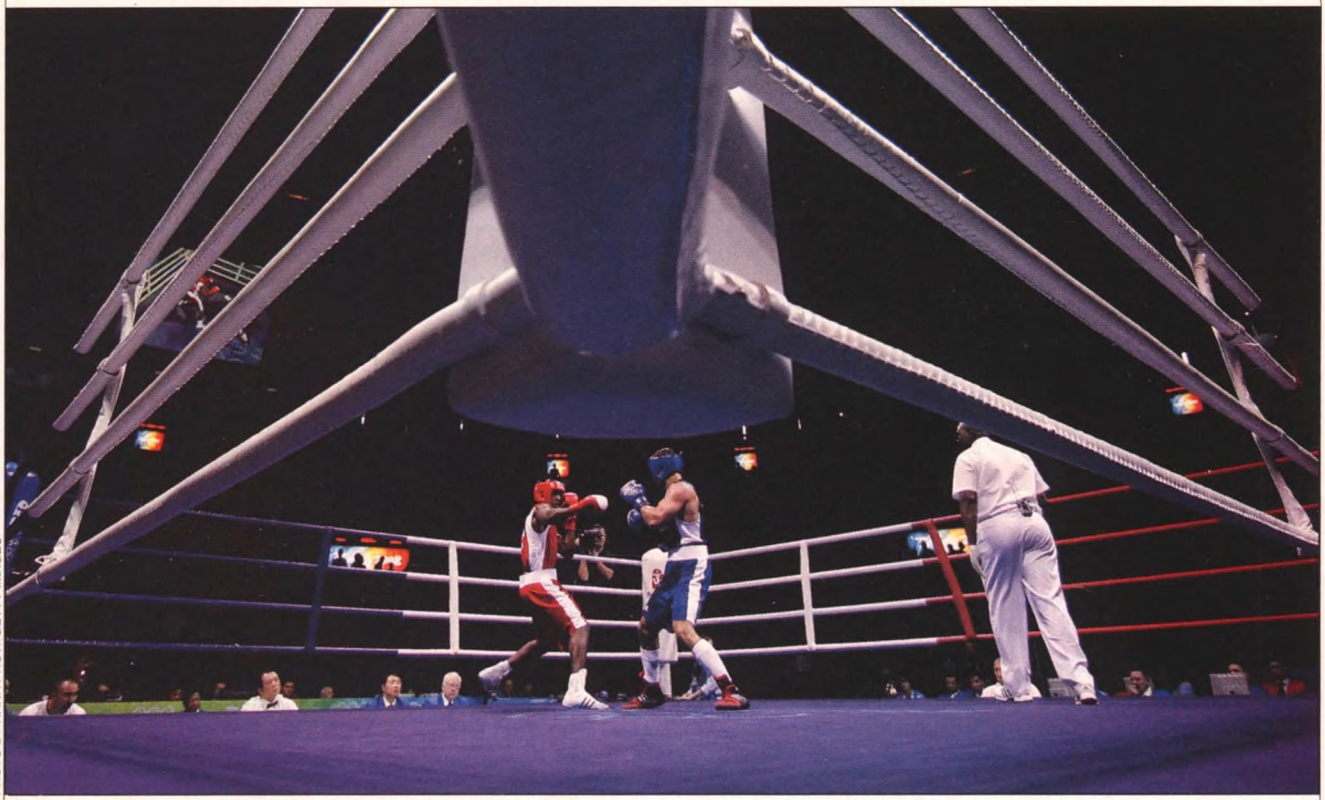


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Not even a cool camera angle could make Olympic boxing look exciting

PHOTO BY JOE KLAMAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Headgear has depersonalized Olympic boxing

the headgear. Yes, it's a safety precaution. But we're talking about *boxing*, an endeavor in which guys hit each other in the face. Giving them football helmets to wear would make things even safer, but do we want to do that?

Headgear has completely depersonalized the combatants, making them look more like Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots than people. No one's hairstyle or facial expression registers with us because we can't see it. A big reason America became enthralled with that heralded U.S. squad of '76 (a group that preceded the headgear rule) was because the stars weren't uniform at all. Leonard had the boyish face, Leon Spinks looked like a maniac when the bell rang, and Howard Davis' mug exuded cool even under the most intense pressure. With headgear on, those guys wouldn't have been nearly as appealing.

The Olympics, which are supposed to showcase the best traits of the amateur game, instead train the spotlight on the worst. Four two-minute rounds ruin the pace and rhythm to which we ringsiders have become accustomed, and are too favorable to the boxer/mover/survivor. A scoring system in which a knockdown and jab count the same defies not just logic, but the spirit of the sport. And as for determining a winner via a computerized punch-tally, well, if that's the march of progress, then give me a Neanderthal judge awarding rounds by using a mammoth's tusk to scratch "10-9" onto a cave wall.

The computer system was devised following the screwing of Roy Jones in Seoul in 1988, which was itself a payback for the screwing the South Korean fighters received in Los Angeles in 1984. And it's utilized no better now than it was in previous Olympiads. If the fighters' gloves had, say, microchips implanted in them that could register clean hits, computer scoring would be a great idea. But as along as human beings have to push buttons to record connecting punches,

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from the hottest Colombian this side of Shakira to an intriguing short story:

•Following his 54-second hammering of Amir Khan, it would be great to see Colombia's Breidis Prescott get the first crack at lightweight champ Juan Manuel Marquez.

•During NBC's Olympic coverage, reporter Jim Gray repeatedly mispronounced the name of Cuban great Teofilo Stevenson. Not that Gray should be expected to know who Stevenson is. Though the super heavyweight did win gold medals in three different Olympics, hey, he isn't an American.

•Does HBO analyst Max Kellerman (or is that Max Yeller Man?) really believe that people in "barbershops" are talking about the need for Floyd Mayweather to unretire and face Antonio Margarito? Look around, Max. It's 2008. People in barbershops haven't talked about boxing since the days when their television pictures were black and white.

•Some bloggers are fantasizing about a Wladimir Klitschko-Vitali Klitschko heavyweight shootout, but, while it sounds good in some respects, it won't ever happen. For starters, this isn't the Williams Sisters on Wimbledon grass or the Manning Brothers on AstroTurf. Punching your sibling in the face (at least after you've outgrown your teen years) is not very appealing to most people. And let's be frank. With both Klitschkos showing questionable heart at times during their careers, could we really trust that the fight wouldn't have an outcome the brothers predetermined?

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Hot Colombian Prescott after icing Khan

•News that Evander Holyfield is experiencing some financial woes is a tad troubling to those of us who pray he finally hangs it up before turning 50.

•Some recent heavyweight developments included a kayo defeat for 41-year-old Bruce Seldon, John Ruiz competing for yet another paper title, and Andrew Golota ending a 10-month hiatus. These are perfect examples of why the words "heavyweight inaction" are sometimes preferable to the words "heavyweight in action."

•Many tributes to Hall of Famer Joey Giardello, who passed away in September, noted that the former middleweight king once successfully settled a lawsuit against the makers of the film *The Hurricane*. Giardello had been upset that the movie incorrectly portrayed him as winning an unjust decision over Hurricane Carter in 1964. The retelling of that story got me thinking that if anyone should ever take legal action against a filmmaker, it's another Philadelphia legend, Joe Frazier. In the 2001 flick *Ali*, a scene depicted "Smokin' Joe" wanting to quit in his corner during "The Thrilla In Manila." As we all know, trainer Eddie Futch had to stop the fight because Frazier, who was having trouble seeing through swollen eyes, wanted to battle on.

Battered Frazier wanted to keep fighting

•During "THE RING Interview" in the October 2008 issue, junior welterweight Paulie Malignaggi took exception with my description of him as a light hitter by pointing out that I might not have ever been punched in the face in my life. What Malignaggi ought to know is that we have more in common than he realizes. I, too, am a distance runner.

•In Australia, promoters changed their minds at the last moment and ditched an undercard bout that would have featured two dwarfs/midgets/little people, or whatever the politically correct term for them is this week. The matchup was reportedly canceled after sponsors feared the fight would be perceived as a "gimmick." Gee, do you think? The battle was supposed to be for the International Little Man Federation title. That's just what we need, another alphabet organization. Presumably, "ilmf" is in lower-case letters.

we've got problems. Robbery and bad judging are still with us. The only difference is that they've gone high-tech. American Demetrius Andrade lost to South Korea's Kim Jung Joo 11-9, even though it appeared that Andrade had landed more punches. A few fights I watched featured spirited exchanges of combinations with, incredibly, neither fighter being credited for landing a single blow during the sequence of action. Did some of the judges have arthritis of the trigger finger?

Let's not even get into the poor performance of the American fighters, whose total of one medal (heavyweight Deontay Wilder's bronze) was the least the U.S. has won

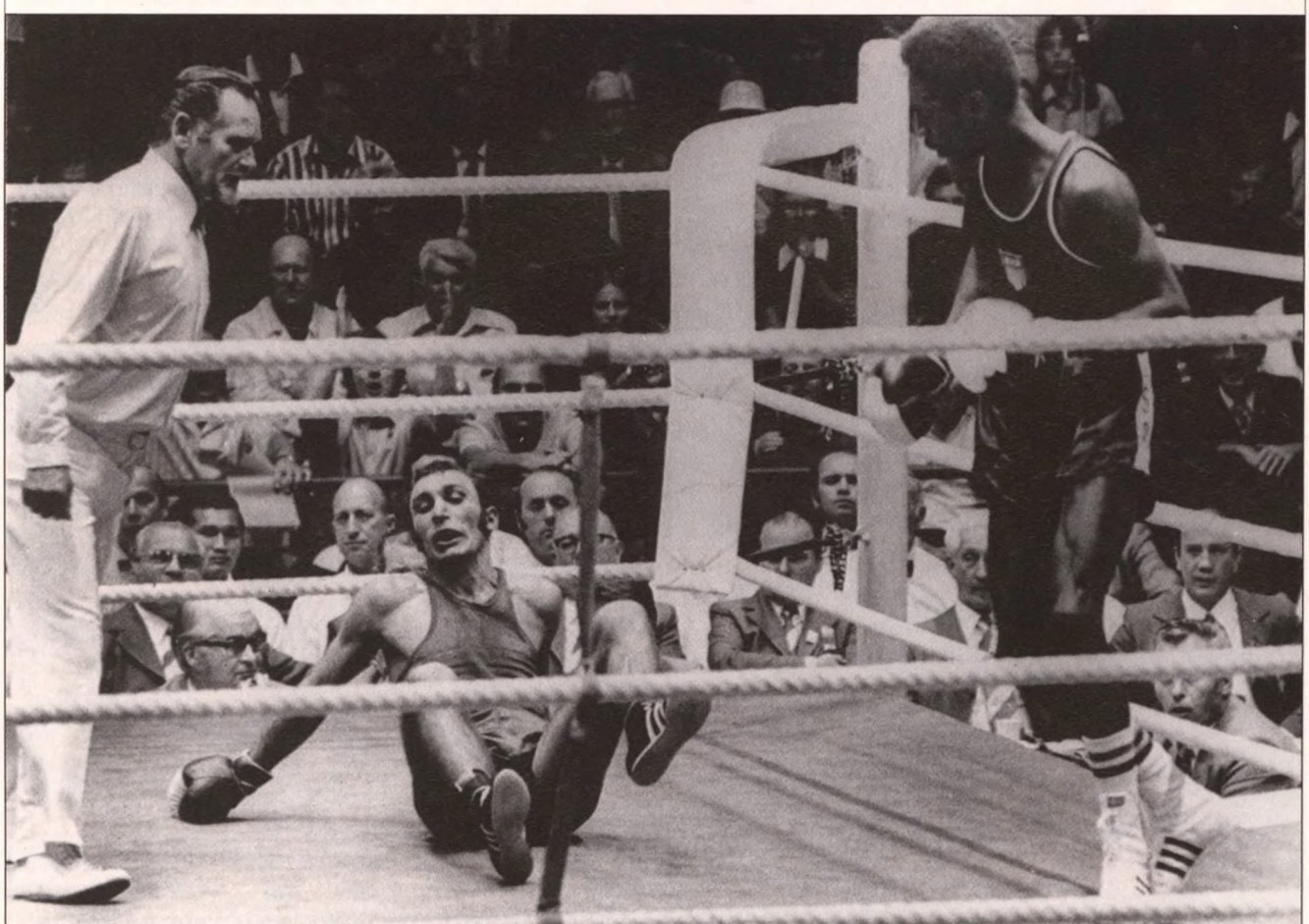
PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Just in case you forgot, this is what a boxing gold medal looks like

since 1948. (By the way, in Wilder's semifinal bout, the computer registered a total of only eight connected punches by the two fighters in eight minutes.) You got the impression, at times, that some of the Americans didn't even want to be there. Bantamweight Gary Russell Jr. failed to make weight. Luis Yanez, who was briefly booted off the team in July after going AWOL, ignored coach Dan Campbell's instructions during a second-round loss. There was much whining about the training program and the limits on family contact and the rule against personal coaches. You know, all things that were designed to make the American fighters bond as a team, but instead were perceived as intolerable nuisances.

Already the asylum is making concessions to the inmates. Campbell, the director of coaching for USA Boxing since 2005, just retired. And plans now call for more involvement by personal coaches and hangers-on in 2012. (What's next? Mandates that nobody has to do roadwork, jump rope, or go to bed before 3 a.m.?) Will any of it matter? Who cares?

This writer grew up loving Olympic boxing, watching George Foreman draw blood in Mexico City (plasma is something else you rarely see in the Games anymore), Sugar Ray Seales mine gold in Munich, and Teofilo Stevenson kayo Duane Bobick and John Tate. Back then, Olympic fisticuffs resembled pro fisticuffs, not fencing. If the IOC doesn't heed my call and drop this pale imitation of pugilism that it offers every four years, don't expect me to star in *CSI: London* in 2012, frantically searching for clues as to where the boxing coverage will surface. I'll switch my allegiance to water polo. ■



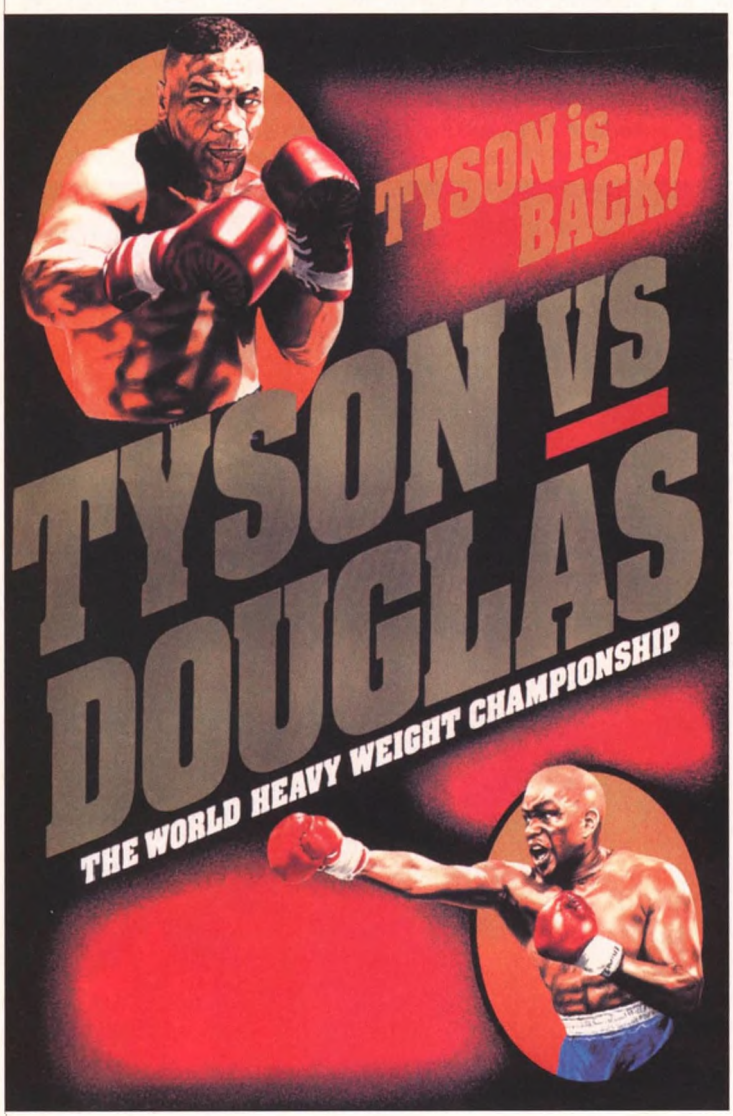
The good old days: Ray Seales en route to gold in 1972

By Ivan Goldman

The Night A Snowball From Hell Conked Iron Mike

Anyone else notice that Mike Tyson, ringside for Juan Manuel Marquez-Joel Casamayor, was neither dead nor in prison? So much for conventional wisdom. He looked great.

Even though fans tell him practically every day of his life how much they appreciate him, I wonder if Iron Mike truly understands how firmly his spectacular feats live on in our minds. This includes, of course, his failures because it always takes two fighters to create a great fight.



Some memories never fade

Years after the fact, Bernard Fernandez of the *Philadelphia Daily News* wrote a fascinating account about what it was like inside the Tokyo Dome February 11,1990,when Buster Douglas pulled off the greatest upset in history, kayoing Tyson, the heavyweight champion who'd been widely considered the most invincible earthling of our time.

Though I wasn't in Tokyo for the Tyson-Douglas fight, it stays with me as much as any I've attended, partly because of my own peculiar circumstances that night. I saw what would become the boxing world's equivalent of the first moon landing while sitting at my desk in the cavernous newsroom of *The San Diego Union*. Oddly, I must have been the only fight fan among reporters and editors sprinkled around the room, because no one else paid any attention to the overhead TV that was lifting a signal out of nearby Tijuana. I kept the sound off in order not to disturb co-workers.

Americans on the scene in Tokyo, Fernandez among them, said afterward that the quiet in the stadium might have been the oddest part of the evening. Japanese fans don't boo or cheer, Fernandez recalled. They just watch. But he was no doubt sitting with other fight writers who tend to discuss what they're watching and trade scoring opinions.

Back in San Diego, I heard no reactions whatsoever to these unbelievable proceedings—not from TV commentators or from anyone around me. This placed me in a kind of private sound chamber, with no one to certify the incredible, almost dreamlike vision passing before me. When you're seeing such a cataclysmic event, you want to jump, holler, exclaim, but because I was viewing it on the sly (I had work to do, but it would have to wait), I was forced to bottle up emotions, making the isolation even more complete—and eerie.

You have to remember that in those days fans watched Tyson fights to witness a beating. We were all like kids buying Superman comics. We were certain who'd be victorious on the last page, but we

Goldman had trouble believing his eyes

wanted to see how he got there. Or you could liken it to tossing a mouse to a tiger. *Hmm*, I wonder how long poor Mickey will last?

But after a while I began saying to myself, *You know, this isn't a blowout at all. In fact, Tyson, though putting up one heck of a fight, looks behind to me. Douglas has his number. Iron Mike's busted up and his corner looks frantic.*

But watching such an unexpected flow of events coupled with no sound, no shocked announcers, no one else confirming my observations, felt like I was viewing little green men emerging from flying saucers. Maybe if I just stayed quiet and didn't panic, the little men would disappear and I could forget all about this hallucination.

Then when Tyson dropped Douglas in the eighth round, it seemed to confirm that, yes, I'd been losing my mind, but I was okay now. It was just taking Tyson a little longer to accomplish the inevitable. When Douglas rose and recommenced the pounding, I realized that even if I *was* nuts, the rest of the world was keeping me company.

We know the outcome—not just a stoppage but an honest to God knockout in the 10th round, with the wrong guy on his feet, and dazed Tyson, knees on the canvas, so far down Queer Street that he forgot it was more important to beat the count than to retrieve the blurry mouthpiece floating before him on the canvas. Douglas had not only made a snowball in hell; he'd conked Tyson with it.

Though I respect and often enjoy listening to most of the crews who call fights on TV, every once in a while I turn off the sound in an effort to repeat the magic I felt that night in 1990. And maybe someday it will work.

Will Bambi Stomp Godzilla? The difference in size between Manny Pacquiao and Oscar De La Hoya and will make it look like Bambi vs. Godzilla all over again, except this Bambi actually stands a chance. Paying customers don't see many matches with this much size differ-

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Don't expect Pacquiao to do this to Oscar

ential, but it happens all the time in the gyms, where fighters pay far less attention to who weighs what when they search for competitive sparring partners.

We should have seen this coming a long time ago, actually. They couldn't find a Mexican who could beat Pacquiao, so they decided to bring in a bigger Mexican. And please don't write angry letters telling me De La Hoya's American. I know it, but I'm not sure he does, which must be why he insists on making us all listen to the Mexican National Anthem before his matches.

I believe Freddie Roach is sincere when he says this should be an easy fight for "Pac-Man." But I see this contest unfolding much like Roberto Duran-Sugar Ray Leonard II. Just as Duran's hands of stone couldn't get Leonard out of there, I doubt even the heavy-fisted Pacquiao can put away Oscar. Like Leonard, the man's got a chin.

Though Pacquiao has never signed on for 12 rounds against an opponent with Oscar's power, neither has De La Hoya gone a scheduled 12 rounds against a busy, lightning-fast fighter like the Pac-Man. So either Oscar gets to Manny and knocks him out, or it goes to the judges, in which case the always-determined Pacquiao stands an excellent chance.

Olympic Lottery: A friend called me this summer seething with rage. "Have you seen any Olympic boxing?" he sputtered.

Oh, that. Sure, I told him. When it gets down to winning and losing, what you have to do is forget it's a boxing match. Just pretend two guys are up there playing the lottery. When it's over, one of them wins. That's a damn fine proposition, 50-50. Lottery odds are usually about 10 billion-to-one.

Try to look upon each landed punch as a throw of the dice, I told him. Sometimes they get scored, sometimes they don't. Plus, in the spirit of inter-galactic brotherhood, I thought it was a nice touch when Olympic officials evidently brought some of its judges over from Mars.

Yet the boxers, gentle souls that they generally are, seemed to have kept their cool. Not so Cuban tae kwon do light heavyweight Angel Matos, who, after disagreeing with a call by the ref, kicked him in the face. Matos and his coach, who defended his athlete's lunacy, were both banned from the Olympics for life.

Now that Olympic boxing has devolved into a game of tag, its outcomes have become even poorer predictors of how fighters might fare in the pros. It makes less sense for young fighters looking to turn pro to hang around the amateurs in hopes of scoring Olympic gold. The amateurs are a valuable training ground, but too many things can go wrong that have nothing to do with their fighting.

Another thing we learned at the Games: Remember all those people who were telling us open scoring would uplift the pro game? They were wrong.

No Excuses: Said Joan Guzman, who cancelled his lightweight title match after coming 3½ pounds heavy for his fight with Nate Campbell: "Put the blame on me, Joan Guzman, because I was completely at fault. My conduct in this important matter was unprofessional." In an age when nobody seems willing to take the blame for anything, his attitude was refreshing, but still didn't erase the damage he caused.

PHOTO BY JUNG YEON-JE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

At least the U.S. boxing team didn't resort to this

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Sorry, folks, no free replay of Marquez-Casamayor

No Freebie This Time: You could hear coast-to-coast groans when Marquez' kayo of Casamayor was *not* shown on HBO the next week, tripping up all those fans who'd come to expect a replay of its pay-per-view main event. As far as I know, HBO had never engraved the practice in stone.

Unrepresented African-Americans: You don't have to live in California or believe in affirmative action to understand that something's screwy when there are still no black judges or referees in California. Retired cop, former amateur fighter, and lifelong African-American John Frierson left me a phone message when he regained his seat on the commission. He intends to keep rubbing the other commissioners' noses in their exclusionary mess until they do something to change it.

Those individuals who do the hiring aren't necessarily racists, but they're part of an old boy network formed generations ago, and blacks aren't part of it. Meanwhile, it's no accident that plenty of officials share the same last names. Yes, they're related. In the interest of fairness, it's way past time to scrap the old network and start all over again.

Magoo: If they have any openings for 2012, I know a judge who will fit right in to the Olympic scoring system—Glen Hamada, who had it 115-113 for Michael Katsidis over Juan Diaz. ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

What was Hamada watching?

Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In the ring, Manny Pacquiao brings the pain; outside it, he brings emotional healing. In September, Pacquiao and General Alexander Yano came to a military hospital in Manila, Philippines, to visit soldiers wounded in battle with Muslim separatist guerillas. It's no laughing matter, but we must admit, we got a chuckle when we learned the guerillas are known as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front—or "MILF." We're guessing they don't realize that acronym has a slightly different meaning in America.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

In an attempt to top George Foreman's famous five-opponents-in-one-night exhibition, Wladimir Klitschko has vowed to knock out 12 school children in one afternoon. Either that, or he's posing with a bunch of kids in Berlin, Germany, at the opening of the Laureus Sports Awards exhibition at the Mercedes-Benz center.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

They're both named Joe. They're both of Italian descent. They're both wearing blue jeans, untucked button-down shirts with no ties, and suit jackets. If it wasn't for that Ring *belt in Joe Calzaghe's left hand, there might not be anything to separate him from* The Ring *Managing Editor Joe Santoliquito. The two sharp-dressed Joes were together in September for the New York press conference announcing Calzaghe's fight with Roy Jones, where the Welshman was formally presented with his light heavyweight championship strap.*

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

There once was a time when Jackie Mason was a very funny man. If you saw Wednesday Night Fights *on August 6, then you know times have changed. Mason's attempts at boxing-related humor bombed terribly, and it was all poor Joe Tessitore could do to paste this phony smile on his face. Sorry to say it, Jackie, but we've finally found someone more overdue for retirement than Evander Holyfield.*

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

There's only one Ricky Hatton, but there's not only one ticket available for his fight with Paulie Malignaggi. Here, "The Hitman" is holding 5,000 tix, which we suspect means the MGM Grand will turn into a "Hatton Wonderland" full of screaming Brits. Oh, and speaking of things there are only one of, we're confident that come fight time, Hatton will be down to only one chin.

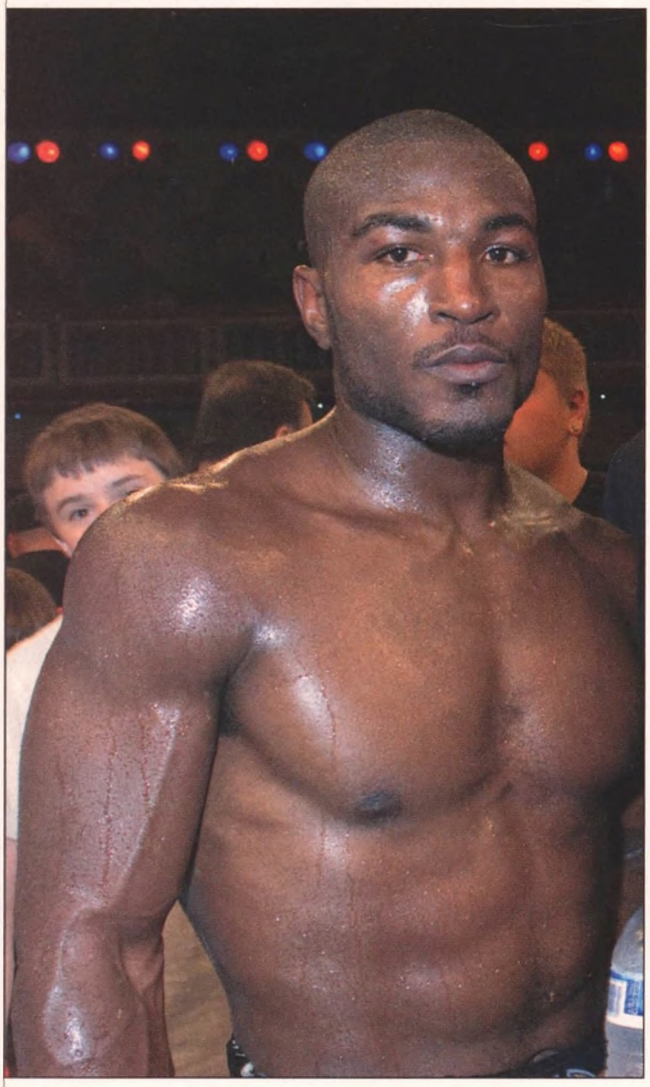
By Joseph Santoliquito
PHOTOS BY TOM BARNES

Tavoris Cloud Light Heavyweight

The nights used to be the hardest. On the head. On the back. But mostly on the mind, with the recurring thought that at any moment a large black roach would crawl over his fingers or a small rodent would sniff by his half-shut eyes as he pretended to be asleep.

Everyone has personal fuel. It's what gets them going, what drives them to go somewhere far from where they used to be. For Tavoris Cloud, his drive to somewhere else is ongoing, but it's his backstory that serves as his firewood, steaming him up each time he's about to enter the ring.

Cloud's early years were spent living in a cramped, two-bedroom apartment that managed to squeeze in 10. The memories of those nights sleeping on a concrete floor, padded thinly by a worn rug, and the fear he might swallow a bug while he slept won't go away that easily. Life then was like "digging out of a crater hole with a spoon," Cloud likes to say.



Life as an undefeated fighter is taking on a different form. The light heavyweight moved a big chunk of earth in his boxing career, stopping Julio Gonzalez for the first time in the former contender's career, in early-August. What's more, the victory in Chicago, Illinois, came on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. Cloud, 19-0 (18), now finds himself in a nice situation, as a mandatory challenger for the winner of the October IBF title fight between Antonio Tarver and Chad Dawson.

But would that be too much too soon for Cloud?

"Why couldn't Cloud step in with Tarver or Dawson?" asked Dan Rafael, ESPN.com's boxing writer. "Cloud looks like he can do a lot of things. It looked like he really enjoyed being in there, and was a real pleasure to watch as a boxing fan. Cloud beat a real credible opponent who had never been stopped before. I'd be interested in watching Cloud against either of those guys. I'd definitely give him a chance."

It's taken a while for the 26-year-old to get there. He wasn't an Olympian. He had to work his way up.

"The Gonzalez win was very important for me," the 5'10" boxer/puncher said. "I looked at that fight as something I had to do to set up to a world championship fight; that's my ultimate goal. That fight was all or nothing. The way I saw it, I was fighting for my life. Gonzalez was a very durable opponent. That's why I believed I was the underdog. Gonzalez and his people were saying a lot of things going into the fight, like I wouldn't be able to last and he'd take me into the deep waters and drown me. But I always knew I could beat someone like Gonzalez. All I needed was the chance. Now I wait for Tarver or Dawson and to get back into the ring in early-2009. Hey, I've been through hell already. I survived that; now here I am."

As opposed to where he once was, passed around as a

(Continued on Page 116)

Pro Record

2004		
April 2	Luis Reyes, Ocala, FL	KO 3
Oct. 9	Taryll Carpenter, Raleigh, NC	KO 1
Oct. 23	Kevin Thompson, Greensboro, NC	KO 1
Nov. 20	Curtis Mullins, Greensboro	KO 3
Dec. 11	Ronald Moore, Greensboro	KO 1
2005		
May 6	Reggie Strickland, Indianapolis, IN	W 4
July 13	Joseph Hill, Gary, IN	KO 3
Nov. 3	Ron Krull, Hammond, IN	KO 2
2006		
Jan. 27	Roosevelt Johnson, Indianapolis	KO 4
March 17	Anthony Dennis, Chicago, IL	KO 2
July 21	Mitch Hicks, Chicago	KO 1
Sept. 15	Tim Shocks, Chicago	KO 4
Nov. 10	Douglas LaFontsee, Cicero, IL	KO 4
2007		
Feb. 16	Aaron Norwood, Cicero	KO 2
May 11	Jim Strohl, Cicero	KO 1
Aug. 24	Jose Luis Herrera, Chicago	KO 5
Dec. 14	Jacob Rodriguez, Cicero	KO 3
2008		
March 28	Mike Wood, Chicago	KO 1
Aug. 8	Julio Gonzalez, Chicago	KO 10

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
19	19	0	0	18

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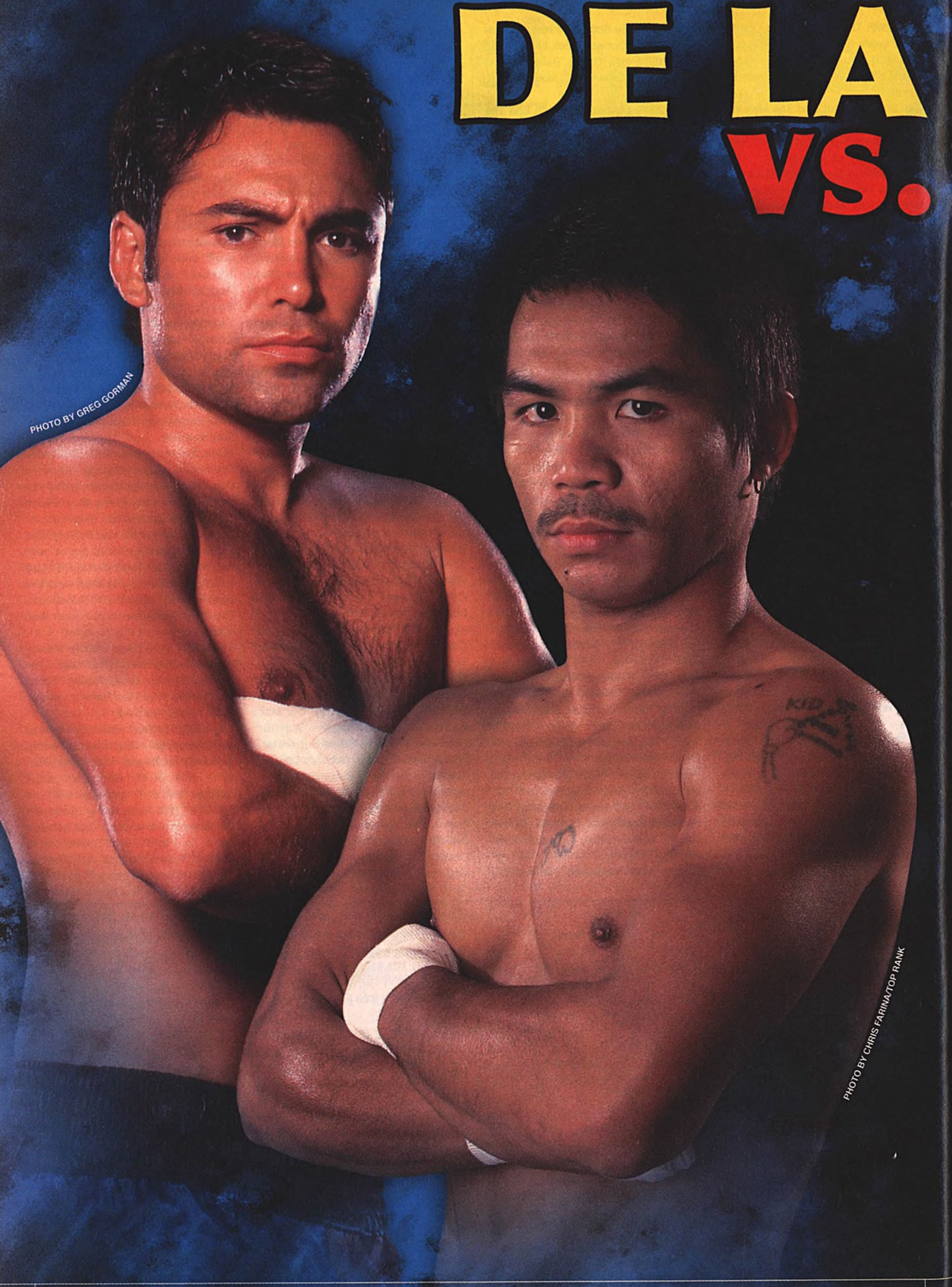

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10 Burning Questions Surrounding 2008's Biggest Fight

By Eric Raskin

It's boxing's biggest attraction vs. boxing's best fighter. How often does a matchup like that come around?

In the Oscar De La Hoya era, pretty darned often.

It theoretically ought to be a rare treat, since the term "pound-for-pound" was created in part to distinguish the best non-heavyweight fighters from the heavyweight superstars who historically tended to command the biggest audiences and overshadow the little guys. But as we near the end of "The Golden Boy" age, enjoying such a pairing is beginning to feel like an annual ritual.

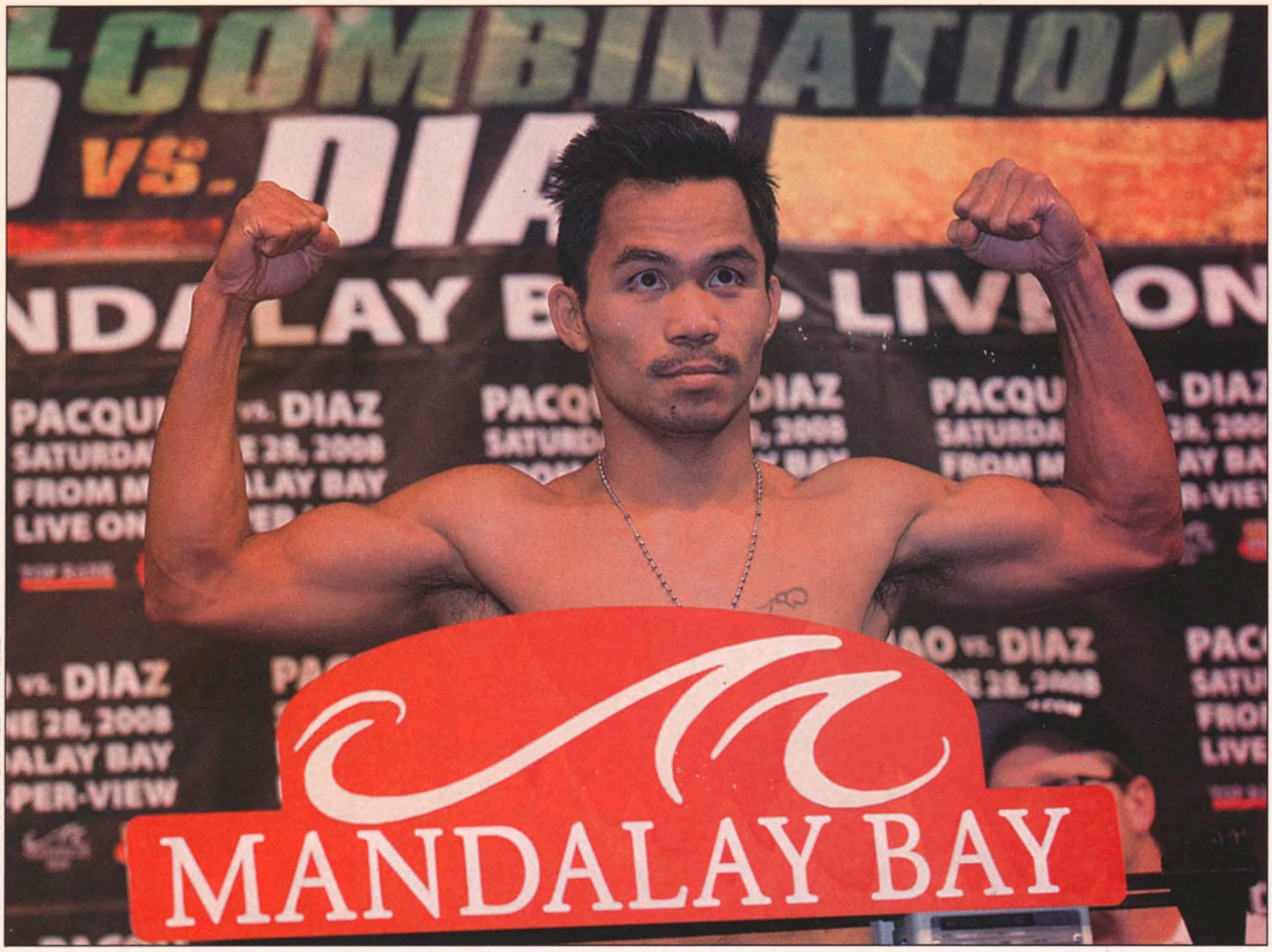
When De La Hoya, the fight game's long-reigning box-office king, steps into the MGM Grand ring on December 6 against Manny Pacquiao, the (more or less) undisputed pound-for-pound champ, it will mark the fourth such matchup in the last 11 years. In 2007, De La Hoya clashed with P-4-P king Floyd Mayweather in the richest prizefight in history. In 2004, he moved up in weight to meet Bernard Hopkins, who was recognized at the time by nearly everyone as the best in the sport. And in 1997, he squared off against Pernell Whitaker. That one may be a slight stretch, since some rated Roy Jones over "Sweet Pea" at the time despite Jones having lost a month earlier to Montell Griffin, and since De La Hoya may not yet have surpassed Mike Tyson as boxing's number-one attraction.

But the bottom line is the same whether you count the Whitaker fight or not: Oscar is always willing to find out how he matches up against the best fighter in the world, and we as boxing fans have benefited in the form of several true "superfights" that have made boxing matter, at least for a few days at a time, in the mainstream sports arena.

One thing we haven't enjoyed yet with these biggest-attraction-vs.-best-fighter duels, however, is a great fight. Or even a good one. But with Whitaker, Hopkins, and Mayweather, is that any surprise? Pacquiao is a very different animal indeed from those cautious, tactical boxers—emphasis on the word "animal."

So not only will this be a fight that puts the public spotlight on the sport of boxing, not only will this be a fight that makes everyone involved significantly wealthier, and not only will this be a fight that appeals from an intrigue perspective, but it might just be a fight that lives up to its promise once the bell rings and delivers true thrills.

And with fights that generate interest, intrigue, action, and piles upon piles of money, there are always questions attached. Here are the 10 questions about De La Hoya-Pacquiao that are foremost in our minds, and since it isn't easy to wait until December 6 to get all of the answers, THE RING will do its best to provide the answers on these pages:



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Pacquiao flexes after weighing in for the David Diaz bout at 134½ pounds. According to HBO, by the time he stepped into the ring the following night, Pac-Man had bulked up to 147. How much of a weight advantage De La Hoya will have remains to be seen.

1 Who does the contract weight of 147 favor?

Don't let the fact that De La Hoya hasn't seen 147 pounds in 7½ years fool you; the agreement to weigh in at the welterweight limit is an advantage for The Golden Boy, even if he does struggle mightily to shed the last couple of pounds.

A few decades ago, back when weigh-ins took place on the day of the fight, maybe that wouldn't have been the case, but with day-before weigh-ins, Oscar will have roughly 30 hours to rest, re-hydrate, and replenish. He made 150 for his fight with Steve Forbes in May and showed no ill effects, and with a team of handsomely paid pros monitoring his every caloric intake, he'll make 147 comfortably enough that it won't have any major impact on his performance.

And in the ring on fight night, De La Hoya rates to weigh about 160, which is potentially bad news for Pacquiao. The Filipino superstar *just* moved up to lightweight one fight ago. He's at most a small lightweight now, and arguably he could still be a junior lightweight. He's certainly no welterweight, and his trainer, Freddie Roach, has indicated he'd like Pac-Man to weigh in around 140 pounds and weigh 145 at fight time. So that's approximately 15 pounds he'll be giving away in the ring.

Nobody's saying that's an insurmountable gap. But it is obviously a gap that favors De La Hoya and gives Pacquiao some significant disadvantages to offset if he's going to win.

2 How will Freddie Roach's experience training De La Hoya impact the fight?

At the very least, Roach is doing his best to drive up interest in the fight, selling to those who view this as a mismatch in favor of De La Hoya by claiming publicly that Pacquiao will be too much for the bigger fighter. And at the same time, he's playing a mental game with Oscar. *I've spent a couple of months with you in the gym, I wasn't that impressed, and I know how to beat you.*

But does Roach, who worked with De La Hoya for one fight—against Mayweather in May '07—really know how to beat him? Or is it all talk?

Joe Goossen, who famously trained Joel Casamayor to victory over Diego Corrales in their first fight, then switched corners and led Corrales to victory in the rematch, doesn't see Roach's time in the gym with Oscar as a major factor.

"When I went with Diego, we were up against a guy I'd worked with for six years," Goossen said. "Freddie is going up against a guy he only had one fight with. I think it would have more effect had he been in De La Hoya's corner for this fight, going against Pacquiao. He's been with Pacquiao so long, he really knows the underbelly of what makes Pacquiao tick. But Freddie's knowledge

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Freddie Roach has trained both Pacquiao and De La Hoya in the past, but will be in Pacquiao's corner December 6. Roach thinks his previous work with Oscar will help him prepare Manny.

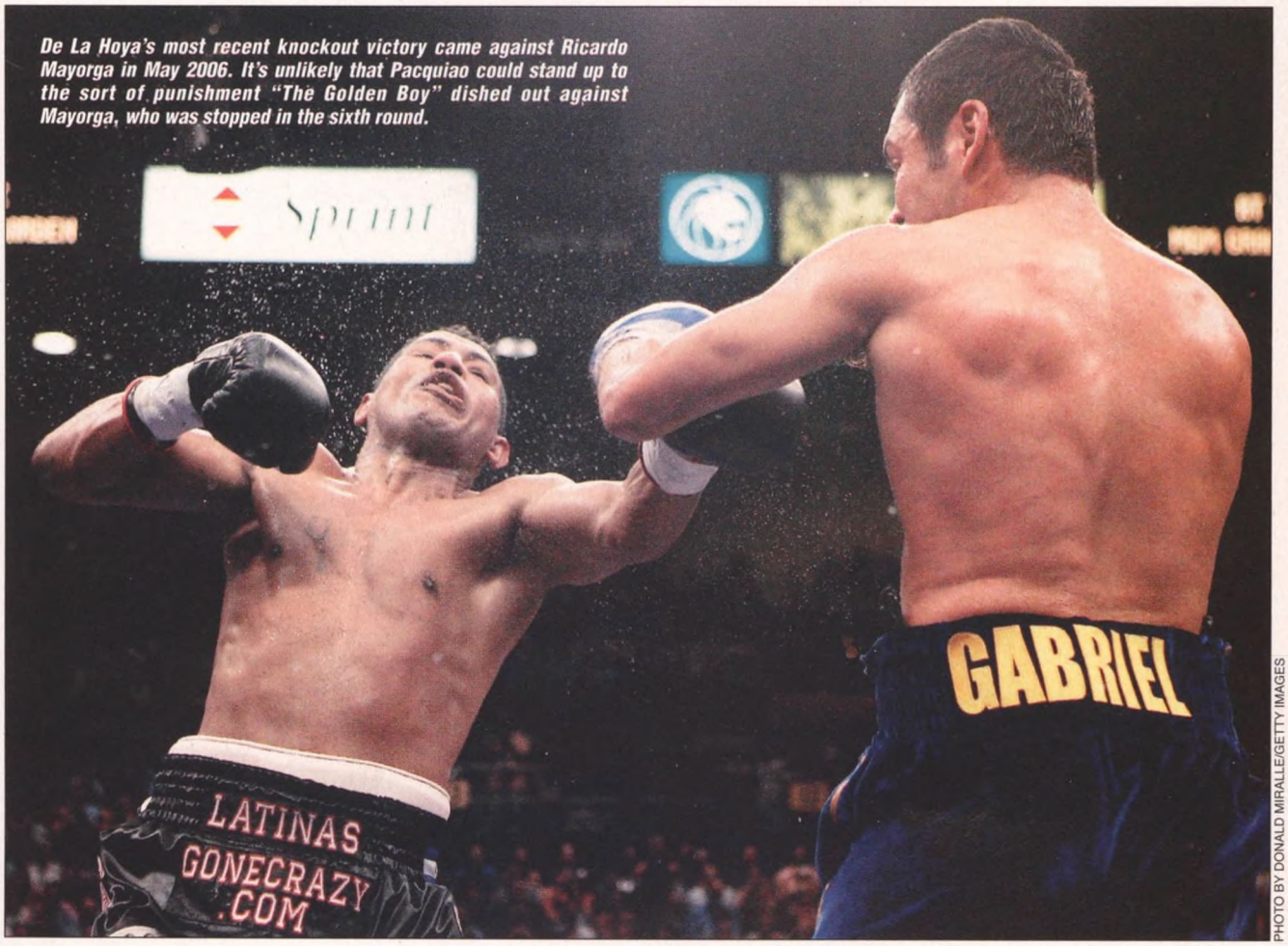
about De La Hoya's strengths and weaknesses, it's limited and I doubt it will have much effect on the fight."

3 Can De La Hoya handle Pacquiao's speed?

The good news for Oscar fans is that he was by no means overwhelmed by the hand speed of Mayweather. The bad news is that he did lose that fight, and that he'll be 19 months older when he steps into the ring with Pacquiao. With his 36th birthday closing in, De La Hoya's reflexes aren't suddenly going to get better.

In interviews, Roach has been very clear about the fact that he wouldn't have confidence in Pacquiao beating a prime De La Hoya, but that Oscar is far enough from his prime (and can't "pull the trigger") that the door is wide open for the smaller man's speed to fluster him. Is Pacquiao faster than Mayweather? That's hard to say. But he's probably more explosive. He can dart in and out quickly, landing his

De La Hoya's most recent knockout victory came against Ricardo Mayorga in May 2006. It's unlikely that Pacquiao could stand up to the sort of punishment "The Golden Boy" dished out against Mayorga, who was stopped in the sixth round.



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money punch, the straight left hand, before opponents have time to blink. And against a taller, rangier fighter like De La Hoya, darting in and out would seem to be a key element of Pac-Man's attack.

Still, De La Hoya has always been plenty quick-fisted himself. He has a tremendous jab (as long as it isn't "not the night of the jab," of course), which is usually the key weapon in counteracting speed. And he's pretty good at seeing punches coming and getting out of the way. (When was the last time you saw Oscar absorb multiple clean shots in a combination?)

So, while Pacquiao should have a decent edge in speed, unless De La Hoya has completely hit the wall and lost his reflexes, he should be able to cope with that disadvantage.

4 Can Pacquiao handle De La Hoya's power?

Obviously, it will be in Pacquiao's best interests not to find out. There's simply no telling what will happen when a fighter who's used to getting hit by 130- and 135-pounders gets drilled by a hard-hitting, oversized welterweight. But you have to figure there's a limited number of times the Filipino can afford to get caught before he's taking a 10-count.

Those arguing that Pacquiao has a first-rate chin will point out that his only kayo loss in the last 10 years came on a bodyshot in a fight where he was weight-drained, and that in his seven fights against the great trio of Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Juan Manuel Marquez, he was never badly hurt and the only official knockdown he suffered came in the first round of the first Barrera fight and should have been ruled a slip.

Those arguing that Pacquiao's chin is vulnerable will point to the third round of his 2006 fight against the naturally smaller Oscar Larios, when Pac-Man was hurt by a two-punch combination and needed half the round to fully recover.

All told, the guess here is that Pacquiao can only absorb a handful of flush shots from Oscar before it's all over (especially given the way Manny tends to stick his head up in the air from time to time). Pacquiao's goal will of course be to use his speed, reflexes, and southpaw style to prevent De La Hoya from landing flush shots, especially his lights-out left hook.

5 Could Pacquiao's awesome performance against David Diaz have been a mirage?

In hammering Diaz into the canvas in nine rounds in June, Pacquiao truly looked the part of the pound-for-pound king. Everything he did worked, he showed more punching variety than ever before, his footwork and movement were inspired, and, according to CompuBox, he got hit with a paltry 10 punches per round. It was a spectacular showing, bordering on flawless.

And if you expected anything different, then you hadn't studied Pacquiao's opponent very closely.

Diaz is as gutsy as they come, he's experienced, and he can punch a little bit, but even with those attributes, he was made to order for Pacquiao. Too slow with his fists to land effectively and apparently unfamiliar with the term "head movement," Diaz was the perfect foil.

Look, Pacquiao is an all-time great fighter, a living legend, and he de-

Picking On Someone

When you can offer every opponent you face a career-high payday, as De La Hoya has since pretty much the moment he turned pro, you find that the range of opponents available isn't limited only to your weight class. Everyone within two divisions in either direction wants a slice of the pie, and that's led Oscar to quite a few fights against opponents either significantly smaller (like Pacquiao) or significantly bigger. Here's a glimpse at how he's fared when dealing with a notable size differential in either direction:

De La Hoya As The Bigger Man

KO 6 Genaro Hernandez, September 9, 1995: A career junior lightweight moving up to lightweight to face Oscar, "Chicanito" weighed in at just 133, got his nose bashed to bits, and quickly returned to 130 and won another title.

KO 2 James Leija, December 15, 1995: Leija had arguably outgrown 130 pounds by the time he moved up to fight De La Hoya at 135, but they still looked a division or two apart in the ring, and Leija, who'd never been kayoed previously, was overwhelmed.

KO 8 Julio Cesar Chavez, September 18, 1998: The first time they fought, it was on Chavez' turf, 140 pounds. For the rematch, "J.C. Superstar" had to chase Oscar to welterweight, and the size favored De La Hoya (as did age).

L 12 Shane Mosley, June 17, 2000: How could "Sugar Shane," a lightweight just 14 months earlier, defeat an elite, full-sized welter like De La Hoya? As it turned out, his speed and stamina edges mattered more than the poundage he was surrendering.

KO 5 Arturo Gatti, March 24, 2001: At any weight, this would have been a mismatch, but Gatti *really* didn't belong at 147. Not surprisingly, all of the success he had the rest of his career came at 140-142 pounds.

L 12 Floyd Mayweather, May 5, 2007: Oscar weighed 154, Mayweather only 150 for the richest prize fight ever, but as in the first Mosley fight, speed and stamina were the key factors in a narrow decision win for the smaller man.

W 12 Stevie Forbes, May 3, 2008: Some would say just lasting the distance against De La Hoya, and winning perhaps one round along the way, was a moral victory for former 130-pound titlist Forbes in this 150-pound bout.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya destroyed smaller Gatti

A Different Size

De La Hoya As The Smaller Man

W 12 Javier Castillejo, June 23, 2001: When Oscar jumped divisions early in his career, it was rarely against opponents who were big for the weight; for his first fight at 154, however, he chose a longtime junior middle just about ready to climb to middleweight. But De La Hoya picked Castillejo for a reason: Talent-wise, this wasn't close.

KO 11 Fernando Vargas, September 14, 2002: Steroids or not, Vargas was always going to have a size and strength edge over De La Hoya. But the better chin belonged to the smaller man, and after 10 back-and-forth rounds, Oscar found that chin and finished the job.

W 12 Felix Sturm, June 5, 2004: De La Hoya got to middleweight the old-fashioned way—by eating more and training less. The spare tire he brought into this supposed tune-up nearly cost him, as he built an early lead, struggled in the second half, and won a controversial decision to keep his superfight with Bernard Hopkins alive.

KO by 9 Bernard Hopkins, September 18, 2004: Even at a catchweight of 158 (De La Hoya weighed 155, Hopkins 156), Oscar was at a clear disadvantage in this middleweight championship bout. It took "The Executioner" a few rounds to start landing well, but once he did, it was only a matter of time.

—ER

Oscar suffered his only kayo loss to the larger B-Hop

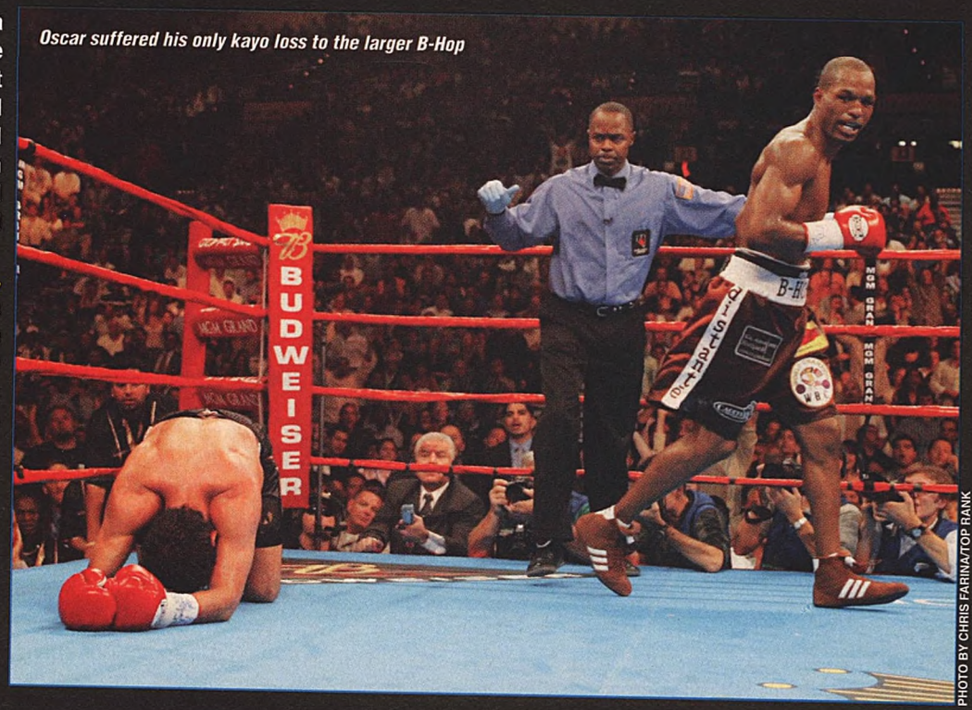


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao looked so sensational knocking out David Diaz that it was easy to get carried away with his performance. But De La Hoya is a much better defensive boxer than Diaz and will not charge in face-first, the way Diaz did.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

served the P-4-P throne the moment Mayweather retired regardless of how he looked against Diaz. But he is not the perfect fighting machine we saw on the night of June 28. Against De La Hoya, even if he wins, some of Pacquiao's flaws will be brought to the surface.

6 Should De La Hoya's plan be to use his superior length and fight outside or to use his superior strength and fight inside?

Pacquiao is 5'6½" with a 67-inch reach. De La Hoya is 5'10½" with a 73-inch reach. You don't have to be Isaac Newton to understand that those numbers give Oscar the option of putting rounds in the bank by boxing behind a long, stiff jab.

But would that be a wise option? Goossen doesn't think so.

"I personally think that De La Hoya cannot afford to back up and box this guy, because that's not going to look good," Goossen said. "If you're a guy that's been fighting at 160, 154, you've been knocking out bigger guys, you cannot go into a fight with a 130-pounder, who's short, and give him that kind of respect, that you're going to back up and be cautious. De La Hoya should go right after him from round one and try to knock him out. De La Hoya should fight like the big man in there and show him who's in charge. If De La Hoya were to go in there and destroy him within five rounds, which is a distinct possibility, I think it would really add to De La Hoya's credibility and his legend and make him look even more great."

7 Will this really be De La Hoya's last fight?

This is really a question that needs to be divided into three sub-questions: What if Oscar wins? What if Oscar loses? And what if Oscar loses brutally?

During the conference call to announce the fight, De La Hoya left the door open, saying, "I don't rule out the possibility of having another fight next

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

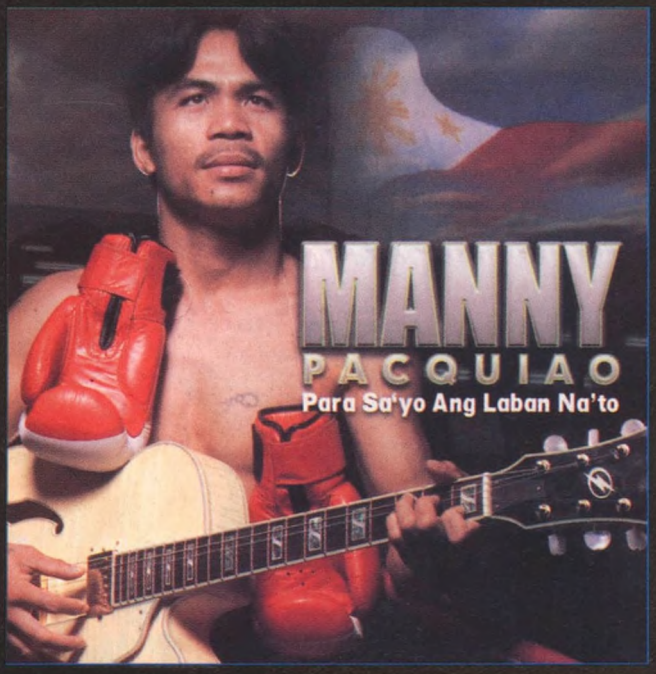
As it was for the Floyd Mayweather-De La Hoya match, the MGM Grand will be filled to capacity for Pacquiao-De La Hoya. But it's going to be very difficult to equal the 2.4 millions pay-per-view buys generated Mayweather-De La Hoya.

Face The Music

We live in a world where far more people saw David Cook and David Archuleta wearing boxing gloves on this past spring's *American Idol* finale than will see any two real fighters wearing gloves this year, so it's only natural to suggest that the question of who's the better fighter, Pacquiao or De La Hoya, is of secondary importance to this question: Who's the better singer?

One of the unusual common threads regarding this fight is that both Oscar and Manny have released music CDs: De La Hoya put out an eponymous album in 2000, and Pacquiao issued *Para Sa'yo Ang Laban Na'to* in 2006. So which is better?

Naturally, it depends on what you like. Both can be categorized as pop music, but De La Hoya's CD has a Latin flavor (the goal was obviously to appeal to fans of Enrique Iglesias and Marc Anthony), while Pacquiao's comes off as Filipino singer/songwriter fare. Their voices are actually quite similar—both on the high side, neither capable of pulling off any glory notes, but both capable of remaining on key (at least in the studio). In the end, De La Hoya's album is perhaps a tad overproduced (there were real pros like Diane Warren and Rudy Perez involved), and Pacquiao's songs come off as more heartfelt and, therefore, less cheesy. For this boxing writer, who isn't a professional music critic, Pac-Man wins via close decision.



—ER

Really Odd Odds

De La Hoya will enter the ring on December 6 as the favorite. But how big of a favorite is he? It depends whom you ask. And it can also vary enormously depending upon whom you ask.

At the presser to announce the fight, the MGM Grand's Scott Ghertner said his initial odds saw De La Hoya at 8-5, meaning you'd have to bet $160 on Oscar to win $100. Meanwhile, online gaming site Bodog released odds that had De La Hoya a 4-1 fave, offering 3-1 on Pacquiao. So if you bet $100 on Pacquiao, you'd stand to win $300.

How can there be such a disparity? Apparently, whoever sets the odds at Bodog doesn't have much respect for Pacquiao's abilities. But rather than wasting time figuring out why the odds are what they are, shouldn't we all be racing to the betting windows? If you bet $240 on De La Hoya at MGM and $100 on Pacquiao at Bodog, then you profit $50 overall if Oscar wins and $60 overall if Pac-Man wins.

And you pray that it doesn't end in a draw.

—ER

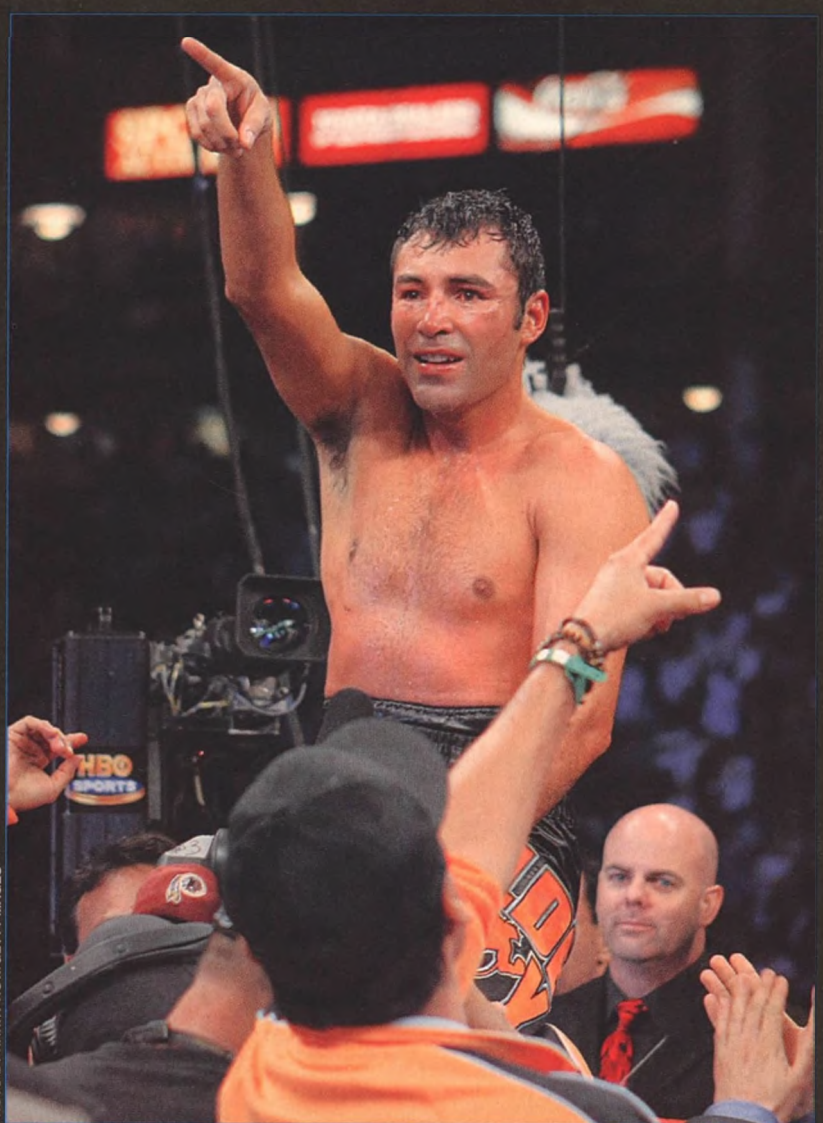


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Betting odds figure to favor Oscar

year." So it sure sounds like this won't be The Golden Boy's farewell.

But suppose he looks like a completely shot fighter, takes a beating from the blazing fists of Pacquiao, and ends up quitting on his stool. Such a scenario might lead De La Hoya to hang 'em up, especially given the likely urging from his family.

The other two scenarios probably mean we'll see De La Hoya fight at least once more. If he loses but doesn't look totally washed-up in the process, he'll feel compelled to go out on a better note. And if he wins, well, how can he say no to another major money grab on Cinco de Mayo weekend 2009? If Mayweather un-retires, if Ricky Hatton beats Paulie Malignaggi two weeks before De La Hoya-Pacquiao, or if Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. remains unbeaten, then there's a superfight opponent out there. And it doesn't sound like Oscar's in the mood to turn down one last superfight.

8 How many pay-per-view buys will it generate?

The short answer: more than any other fight that could possibly be made right now. We suppose that's why both sides found a way to make it happen after negotiations initially seemed to stall out.

Realistically, it's hard to envision De La Hoya-Pacquiao approaching the record 2.4 million sales achieved by De La Hoya-Mayweather ... but then again, it was hard to envision De La Hoya-Mayweather selling that well, since most prefight projections were in the 2 million buy range. Still, the fact that a decent segment of the boxing populace views this as a mismatch, combined with the fact that the average American's spending budget for such things as pay-per-view boxing shrinks around the gift-giving season, would suggest that this isn't going to catch Oscar vs. Floyd.

But it should catch De La Hoya's second biggest seller, his 1999 bout with Felix Trinidad, which garnered about 1.4 million buys. Remember, that fight was before the digital cable age, meaning illegal "black boxes" were commonplace. Also, De La Hoya-Pacquiao will have the

advantage of being promoted via HBO's *24/7* series, a remarkable marketing vehicle that may have added hundreds of thousands of buys to De La Hoya-Mayweather's total.

The guess here is that this fight will hit the 1.5 million mark, with the potential to possibly reach as high as 2 million if the *24/7* clips can convince the mainstream fan that Pacquiao has a legitimate shot at winning.

9 If Pacquiao loses, does it impact him at all?

Naturally, it depends how he loses. If it's a competitive fight, then no, Pacquiao's drawing power and icon status are unaffected. If it's a quickie blowout, then yes, his reputation may take a hit. But it would only be a slight hit, since he is fighting a guy who's currently three divisions larger than he is and any defeat could be blamed on the size differential.

The interesting question is what would happen to Pacquiao's status as pound-for-pound king in either case. Can you lose non-controversially and still be considered the best in the sport? Maybe back in the Willie Pep/Ray Robinson days of fighting a dozen times a year, you could, but nowadays, every loss weighs more heavily. Still, isn't the idea behind pound-for-pound to suggest who would win if everyone was the same size? And if Oscar is approximately 15 functional pounds bigger than Pacquiao, does that prove anything about the pound-for-pound argument?

The hunch here is that if the fight is competitive, even if De La Hoya wins without controversy, then Pacquiao retains the P-4-P top spot. If it's not competitive and Pacquiao gets squashed, then he probably surrenders the top spot. To be fair, though, a lot will depend upon what happens when P-4-P penultimate Joe Calzaghe takes on Roy Jones a few weeks before De La Hoya-Pacquiao.

Oh, and in case you're curious, if he wins, De La Hoya probably re-enters the top 10. He wouldn't zoom all the way up to number one by beating the number one, obviously, but he could re-crack the list, a list on which few have included him in the last four years.

10 If Pacquiao wins, what does he do for a follow-up?

Phrased another way, how can you possibly avoid a letdown after the high of moving up two divisions and beating the biggest superstar in the sport for an eight-figure payday? Whatever Pacquiao does next—short of a rematch to a close, sensational fight—it will be a backward step in certain regards.

If he goes back to lightweight, yes, there are plenty of quality fighters there, including old rival Marquez, but they're all massive financial comedowns from De La Hoya. It's hard to envision Pac-Man returning to 135 if he beats Oscar. It's easier to imagine him going to 140 to face Ricky Hatton for the junior welterweight championship. After all, Hatton made for a nice follow-up for Mayweather after "Pretty Boy's" win over De La Hoya.

But the real prize would be a fight with Mayweather himself. If Pacquiao beats De La Hoya, don't you feel like a mega-fight against the smaller Filipino, for absolute pound-for-pound supremacy, would be just the sort of thing that could lure "Money" out of retirement?

Maybe it's absurd to look past a fight as fascinating as De La Hoya-Pacquiao in favor of a fight involving a boxer who rarely delivers thrills and currently claims to be retired anyway. Or maybe it's just an honest admission of how we as boxing fans thrive on speculation and fantasy almost as much as we do on reality. After all, when HBO's Larry Merchant first brought up the idea of De La Hoya vs. Pacquiao in late-2007, it was nothing but a wild creature of his imagination. And now it's reality, poised to be the biggest fight of 2008. So perhaps there's nothing wrong with getting ahead of ourselves and wondering about what fantasy fight is next.

If De La Hoya-Pacquiao is proof of anything, it's that fantasy and reality can sometimes become one. And who knows, maybe in a fight between the sport's best fighter and it's biggest star, if it's Pacquiao who wins, those two things might become one also. ■

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THE GOLDEN BOY VS. PAC-MAN

20 Experts Pick The Winner

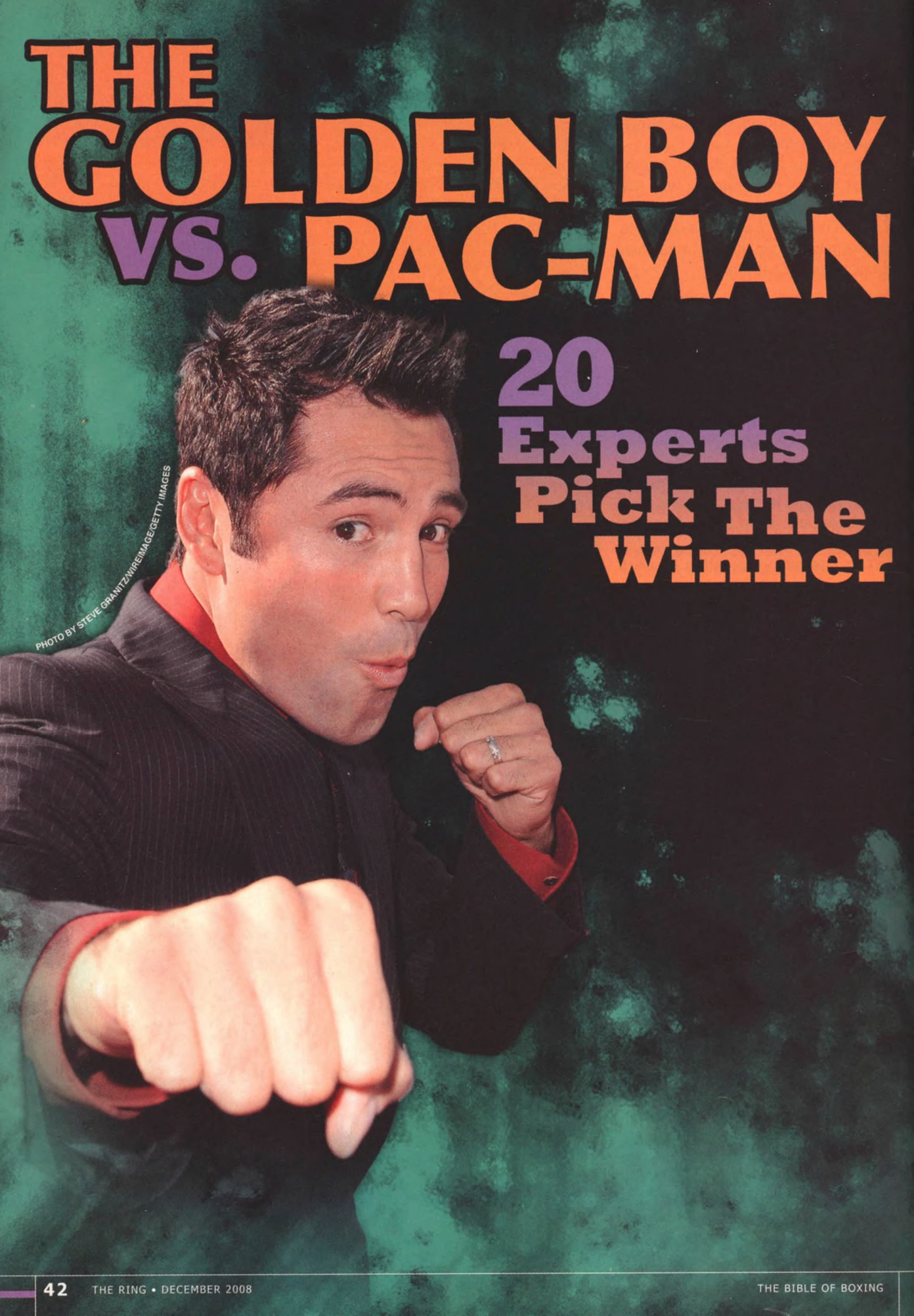


PHOTO BY STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

On paper, it doesn't make much sense for Manny Pacquiao, who last fought at 135 pounds, to meet someone the size of Oscar De La Hoya, who weighed in at 150 for his most recent bout. But whoever said "Pac-Man" was a conformist?

"Pacquiao does everything wrong and makes it work," Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, once said. But that was before Roach refined Manny's go-for-broke, often raw approach by adding head movement, and improving both his balance and right hand.

Even so, getting into the ring with someone at least five inches taller, with a six-inch reach advantage, exceptional hand speed, and a weight advantage anywhere from 10 to 15 pounds is a tremendously difficult assignment. But if anybody is up to such a task it is Pacquiao, widely considered the world's best pound-for-pound fighter.

It is also a unique challenge for De La Hoya, who is expected to win, and win impressively. Anything less could be considered an embarrassment, so in a different way, there's as much pressure on De La Hoya as there is Pacquiao.

We will have to wait until December 6, when De La Hoya, 39-5 (30), and Pacquiao, 47-3-2 (35), clash at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, on HBO Pay-Per-View, to find out who will emerge the winner. But in the meantime, THE RING has polled 20 experts from Latin America, North America, Europe, and the Philippines for their opinions and predictions as to what they think will happen. Here is what they had to say:

PHOTO BY STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

David Diaz (former WBC lightweight titleholder, who lost the belt to Pacquiao): "I honestly think De La Hoya should win. Manny has a chance, like any other fighter would when they step into the ring, but Oscar's size, his height, and the weight difference, to me, that is a big deal. Those are pretty big boys up there at 154, 160. Those guys have range, and cut off a ring, especially someone as talented as Oscar. I haven't seen Oscar stop anyone in a while, but I think De La Hoya will easily beat Manny by decision."

Jim Strickland (David Diaz' trainer): "In contrast to most people, who think the bigger size of De La Hoya will make a significant difference, I tend to favor Manny. He has faster hands and has a good chance to absorb a punch. The one advantage Pacquiao will have is he won't have to deplete himself to make the weight. That makes a fighter better equipped. Oscar making 147 will be a factor. It will be a very exciting fight and fairly evenly matched, but I see Manny by decision."

Kevin Mitchell (*The British Observer* boxing writer): "De La Hoya is either going one fight too far or is as smart as he ever was. Manny has his eye on the exit door and a career in politics, and this could be a mistake. The key is the weight. Manny is one of the truly fine smaller men we have seen in the past 10 years or so, losing little power as he moves up through four divisions. This time, though, the disparity in size is considerable. I think De La Hoya will have too much for Pacquiao, stopping him in the ninth."

Dan Rafael (ESPN.com boxing writer): "I think you have to like Oscar in the fight, but you would also be a fool not to give Manny a fighting chance. The key for Oscar is to use his size, because Oscar is a lot taller. The key will be to keep Manny on the end of his jab the whole night. If Manny can effectively get inside of Oscar's jab, he has a chance to do some damage. At the end, I do see Oscar winning the fight, stopping him late. Ultimately, the punching power will be the difference."

Andre Berto (welterweight contender): "I think it will be a good fight, and I'm really good friends with Manny, but Oscar may be a little too big for him. All the odds are against Pacquiao. Oscar may take him a little too lightly, but as of right now, I'd have to go with Oscar by decision. But I won't rule out that Manny could steal the show."

Brian Kenny (ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* studio host): "When it was first being talked about, I was pretty shocked because I never think of lightweights fighting junior middleweights. With my money on the line, I just can't see a guy that size beating a guy so much bigger who can really box. I'm a big believer in a small man being able to beat a big man, but my most likely scenario is Oscar keeping Manny at the end of his jab. I see Oscar winning by decision."

Johnny Falgoust (*USA Today* boxing writer): "I'm really torn with this fight because I can see Pacquiao winning by outworking De La Hoya, but all it could take is one good shot to turn the tide. It's an easy fight for De La Hoya, if he stays behind his jab. Pacquiao has a tendency to come in with his chin straight up. If Pacquiao can take De La Hoya's best shot, he can win. Given that, I'll go with De La Hoya by late-round stoppage. De La Hoya's one punch can be more damaging than four or five of Pacquiao's punches together."

Kendall Holt (junior welterweight contender): "I think that Manny Pacquiao is going to go after him and bang, but De La Hoya is just too big and too powerful for him, and he'll end up stopping him. I think it could go around eight rounds, but De La Hoya will eventually get to him. I see no way Manny can win this fight. I really don't see Manny even winning a round."

Tony Morgan (Andre Berto's trainer): "Manny is just too small for De La Hoya. I'd love to see Manny win. Manny is awkward and strong, but Oscar will pick away with the jab. I think Manny does have the power to hurt Oscar, but Oscar can take a good shot. Oscar will frustrate Manny. But you're talking about a huge jump in weight, against someone who's faced every style in the game. Oscar will win by decision."

Paulie Malignaggi (junior welterweight contender): "If you're an ant, you can't attack a mountain. I hope Manny proves me wrong, but I think there's no way a small junior lightweight fights a large welterweight. You can't mess with nature. The size will take effect over 12 rounds. They both have talent. People think Oscar is shot, but I think he's far from shot. It's not that big a challenge to Oscar De La Hoya. I respect Manny Pacquiao tremendously, but you can't push the forces of nature. I see this ending in four or five rounds for Oscar."

Steve Farhood (*ShoBox* analyst): "I think Oscar will win. He remains quick for his size and age, and the punching power that Pacquiao has relied on against smaller men won't have an effect against Oscar. Whether Oscar is

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Junior welterweight contender Paulie Malignaggi feels Pacquiao can't defy the laws of nature. "If you're an ant, you can't attack a mountain," said "The Magic Man."

weakened dropping to 147 remains to be seen. Manny Pacquiao is the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, but this poundage is asking too much. I see Oscar winning by decision."

Al Bernstein (Showtime boxing analyst): "I'm sure people fall into two categories: They don't think it's an appropriate fight, with a little man fighting a big man, or it's a fascinating fight with Pacquiao being the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world. I think it's a no-lose situation for Pacquiao because if he wins, it's a validation for him to go that far up and win. The bottom line is, if De La Hoya can hit with something really solid, he can hurt him and win the fight. If someone put a gun to my head, I'd say De La Hoya, but in no way, shape, or form is this fight a lock."

Claude Abrams (British *Boxing News* editor): "What makes me go for Oscar is this: If De La Hoya, below par, could push Floyd Mayweather close, then how is Pacquiao, who barely established superiority over Juan Manuel Marquez in two fights, going to defeat him? Oscar's expected to win and that could take some edge off him. But, at the same time, De La Hoya knows that to lose to someone so much smaller is going to be borderline humiliating and I don't think 'The Golden Boy,' for all his amazing achievements, wants to leave the sport like that. My feeling is De La Hoya will probably stop him."

Darius Ortiz (ESPN.com boxing editor): "Pacquiao will be chomping off more than he can chew against the larger Oscar De La Hoya. De La Hoya's nifty jab will catch Pacquiao leaping in and disrupt the Filipino fighter's flow. Don't expect De La Hoya to stand in one place for too long either. The Golden Boy will be on his bicycle and using angles to stem Pacquiao's attack. In the end, De La Hoya's underestimated speed and pinpoint-accurate left hook will spell 'game over' for Pac-Man. It's been a while since we've used 'Pacquiao' and 'loses' together in the same sentence, but I'm confident De La Hoya will climb out of the ring a winner on December 6."

Juan Diaz (lightweight contender): "I got Oscar De La Hoya because he is a natural welterweight and the more skilled out of the two fighters. Manny is too small for Oscar. Manny is a great fighter and very strong for junior lightweight, and even lightweight. The first three rounds might be competitive, but if Oscar pushes his weight around, I doubt it will be a fight. I don't know if Oscar can stop him, and I don't know if Manny will let himself get knocked out."

Enzo Calzaghe (trainer of super middleweight/light heavyweight world champion Joe Calzaghe): "I think it's a circus fight. Oscar was as high as middleweight, and Pacquiao started his career as a junior flyweight. I'd be shocked if Oscar couldn't beat Pacquiao. He's more powerful and certainly fast enough. I expect Oscar to win by a comfortable decision."

Ted Lerner (THE RING's Philippines correspondent): "None of it makes logical sense. And that's the X-factor in this fight. De La Hoya, however, will be super-jacked for this fight. As the favorite and bigger man, he's got more to lose. And he also wants to dish out some payback for Manny signing up with Arum after having first signed with Golden Boy. The fight will be an action-packed give-and-take thrill ride early. After they settle in, though, Oscar will find he's enjoying having his way with the naturally smaller Pacquiao. Pac-Man's indomitable spirit will keep him in it, but Oscar will eventually take over and dominate. De La Hoya by TKO stoppage in the ninth.

Carlos Caban (ESPNdeportes.com senior director): "Oscar was outpointed by Shane Mosley, a fighter who went up in class, and he brought amazing velocity in his punches—similar to what is expected from Pacquiao. This time, though, De La Hoya stands to be better suited, and not just because this could very well be his last professional fight. He will be expecting an all-out war. So, the one weapon capable of annihilating the speed in Pacquiao's punches is Oscar's left hook. And it only needs to land once. It should be over in eight rounds."

Timothy Bradley (WBC junior welterweight titleholder): "De La Hoya isn't what he used to be. Pacquiao won't be the stronger fighter, but I think Pacquiao will win by decision. I just know that Pacquiao won't stay in front of De La Hoya. He'll keep moving, and focus on De La Hoya's body. Oscar is doing this for the fans, because he certainly doesn't need the money. I don't know if his heart is as much into this."

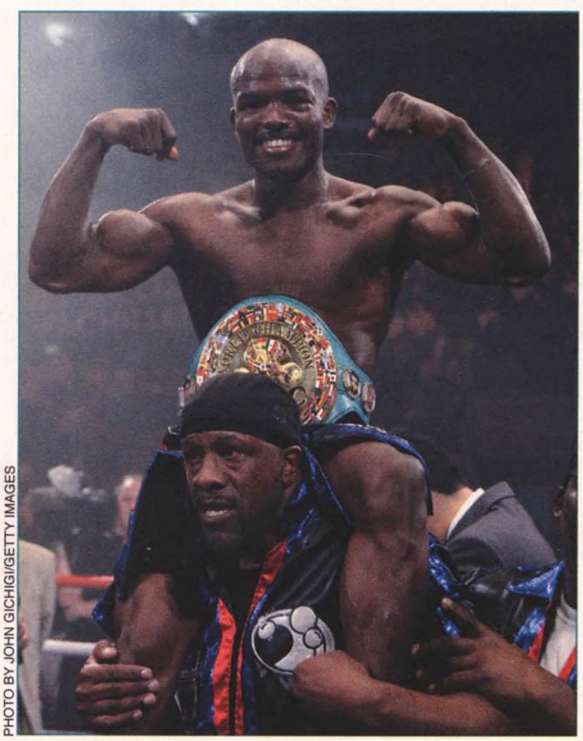


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

WBC junior lightweight titlist Timothy Bradley is one of the few who thinks "Pac-Man" has a shot at beating De La Hoya. "Dessert Storm" questions whether or not De La Hoya's truly committed to the fight or just looking for another large payday.

Alton Merkerson (trainer of Roy Jones): "I think Pacquiao is a very strong guy who can punch, but he's too one-dimensional for someone like Oscar. Oscar will work angles and he has great ring generalship. I see Oscar winning by decision."

Final Tally: De La Hoya 18, Pacquiao 2. ■

LET'S GO to the HISTORY BOOKS

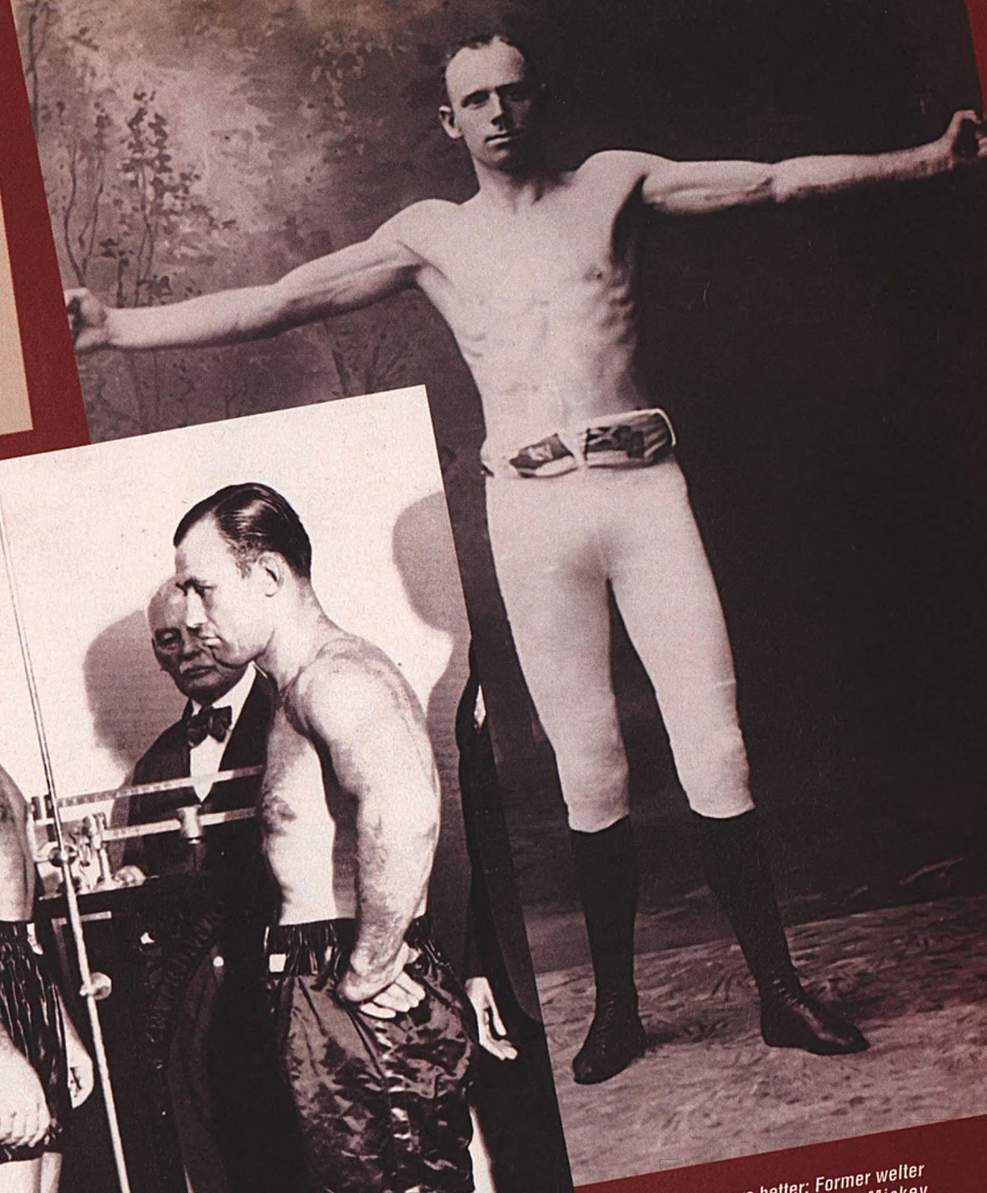
Does The Good Big Man Always Beat The Good Little Man?

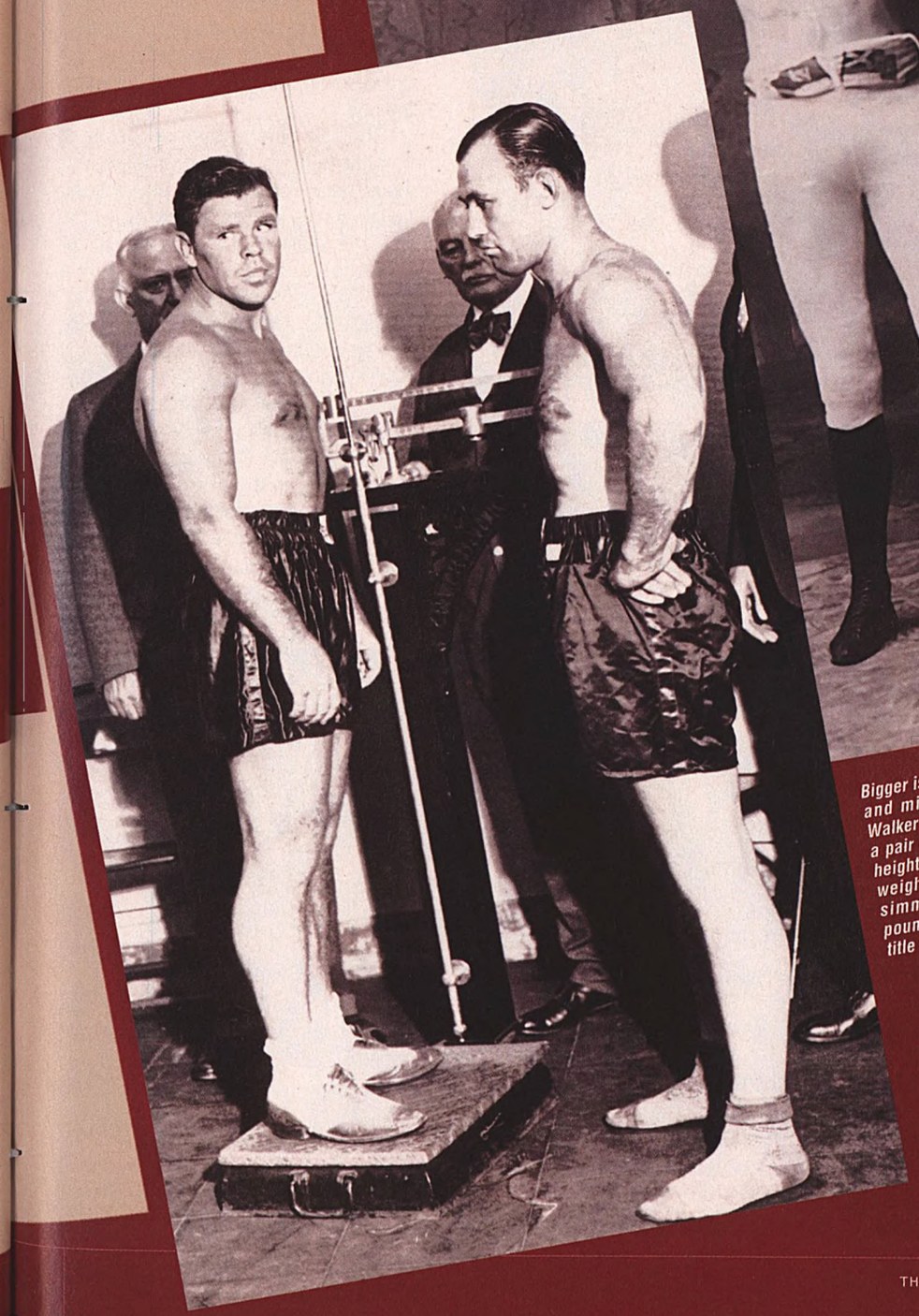
By Don Stradley

The impending clash between lightweight titlist Manny Pacquiao and box-office leviathan Oscar De La Hoya has set off the usual round of discussions about good big men versus good little men. Quite a few Internet message boards have already been spackled with the word "mismatch," and most fans are in agreement that the big man usually prevails. Perhaps you have already been cornered by an uncle who remembers when Bob Foster, the great light heavyweight, met the much heavier Joe Frazier and was nearly drilled into the canvas.

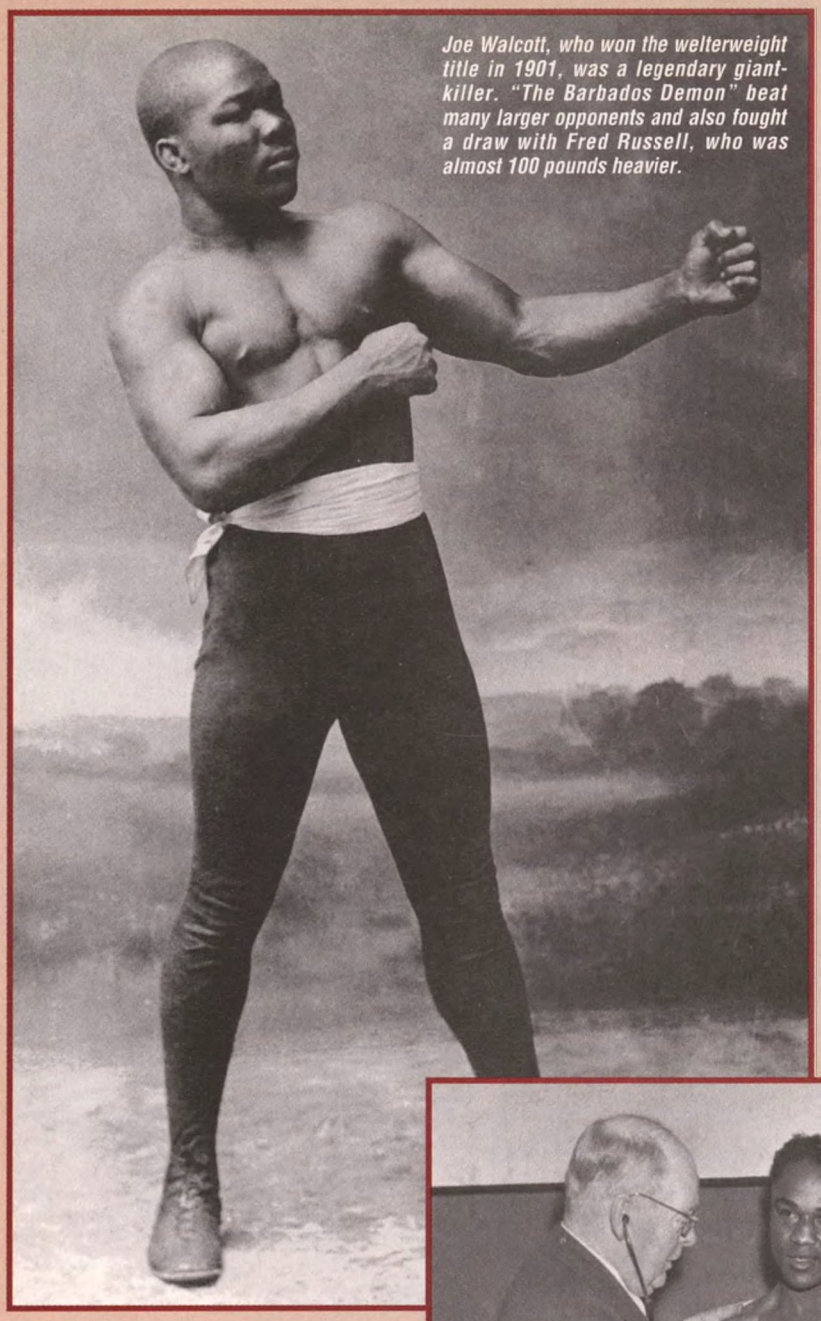
But what's forgotten is that the little guys win some of these matches.

When Mickey Walker, a former champion at welterweight and middleweight, failed to take the light heavyweight title from Tommy Loughran, he stepped up and challenged





Bigger isn't always better: Former welter and middleweight champion Mickey Walker had to step on the scales wearing a pair of shoes to rise to Jack Sharkey's height (left), but held the future heavyweight champion to a draw. Bob Fitzsimmons (above) weighed only 167 pounds when he won the heavyweight title from 183-pound Jim Corbett.



Joe Walcott, who won the welterweight title in 1901, was a legendary giant-killer. "The Barbados Demon" beat many larger opponents and also fought a draw with Fred Russell, who was almost 100 pounds heavier.

the heavyweights of his day. Sometimes outweighed by as much as 50 pounds, Walker won bouts over Johnny Risko (twice), KO Christner, Bearcat Wright, King Levinsky, and Paulino Uzcudun. Walker's reign as a giant killer ended in 1932 when Max Schmeling stopped him in eight, but within three months Walker was at it again, destroying 223-pound Arthur "Coo-Coo" DeKuh at 1:48 of the first round.

"It was my idea to fight the big guys," Walker told author Peter Heller in 1970. "I was the one who sold [manager Jack] Kearns the idea. I wanted to fight the big guys to see if I really could. As a kid, I found it was easier to fight the bigger guys." Walker's reasoning? "The big guys were slower."

Walker, who was well into his 30s when he tackled the heavyweight class, was successful due to his hellbent style. He'd simply wade in throwing punches until the job was done. Jack Sharkey once said of him, "He was a murderous hitter, and tough ... he would bounce off the canvas without taking a count and tear into you with a left hook. Man, he was tough." Sharkey and Walker fought to a controversial draw—most thought Walker deserved the nod.

Sharkey was a favorite target of smaller fighters, including Mike McTigue, Jack Delaney, Tony Shucco, and Loughran. He won some; he lost some. Perhaps Sharkey attracted these lighter challengers because he was only a modest puncher—the "Boston Gob" scored only 14 career knockouts—or perhaps it was because he, like many heavyweights of the late-'20s and early-'30s, tended to underachieve. With such uneven performers as Sharkey, Max Baer, and Primo Carnera at the top of the division, is it any wonder that so many lighter fighters invaded the heavyweight class? In fact, a fighter's decision

Welterweight champion Barney Ross awaits his turn as the commission doctor examines Henry Armstrong prior to their 1938 bout. Armstrong, the reigning featherweight champion, won the 147-pound title via 15-round unanimous decision. The loss ended Ross' Hall of Fame career.

to fight a much larger opponent has often been dictated by his era.

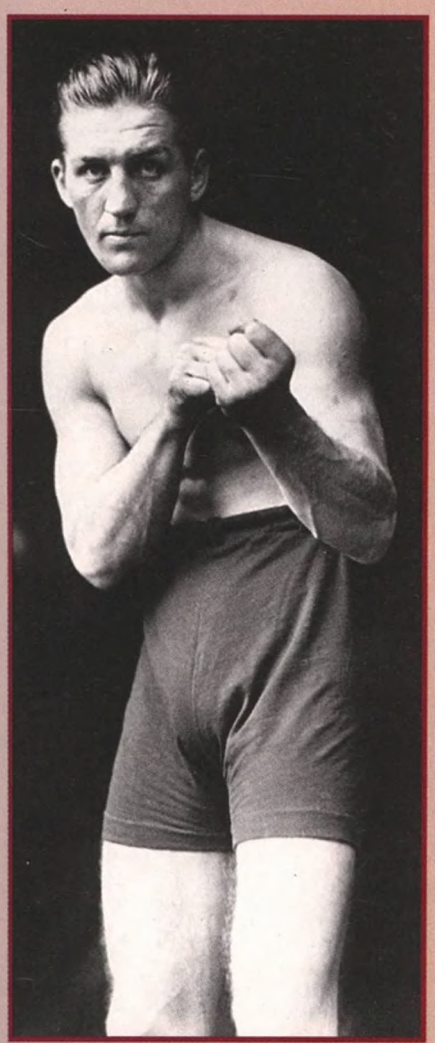
The first prizefight to garner international interest happened to be a big man versus a little man. It took place in 1860 when England's bare-knuckle hero, Tom Sayers, accepted the challenge of America's John C. Heenan. Sayers was outweighed by nearly 40 pounds, but he gave as good as he got until Heenan started strangling him. The ensuing melee at ringside caused the world's first "Fight Of The Century" to end in a draw. In that antediluvian era it was not unusual for a man Sayers' size, 155 or thereabouts, to compete against 200-pounders.

Three decades later, 160-pound Bob Fitzsimons kept up the tradition, regularly fighting men much larger than him. Fitz needed less than two rounds to kayo Ed Dunkhorst, "The Human Freightcar." Dunkhorst's weight was sometimes listed at 260; he retired to a career in vaudeville immediately after Fitz humbled him.

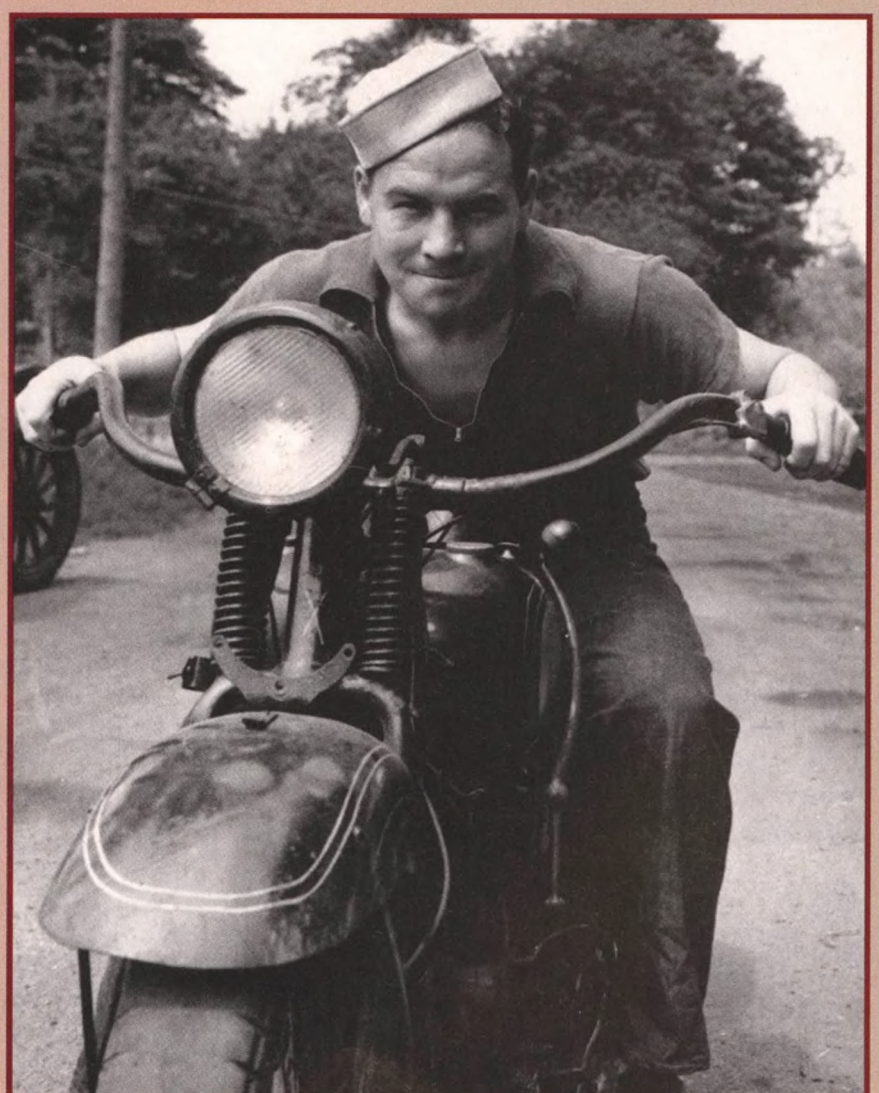
News accounts of the day paid scant attention to Fitzsimmons' weight, as if it didn't merit attention. But when he lost the heavyweight title to Jim Jeffries, most felt it was because he couldn't overcome Jeffries' 40-pound weight advantage. What Jeffries had, though, along with his bulk, was incredible resiliency, which allowed him to outlast Fitz.

The 1900s was an era when black fighters were discriminated against and had to take bouts wherever they could find them. The original Joe Walcott, known as the "Barbados Demon," was a 5'2" welterweight whose record included wins over bigger men like Joe Choynski and Dan Creedon. Walcott outdid himself in 1902 when he battled Fred Russell, who stood over 6'4" and weighed nearly 250 pounds. The bout went into the record books as a draw, but most newspapermen had the windmilling Walcott getting the best of it, even if he had to leap into the air to land his punches.

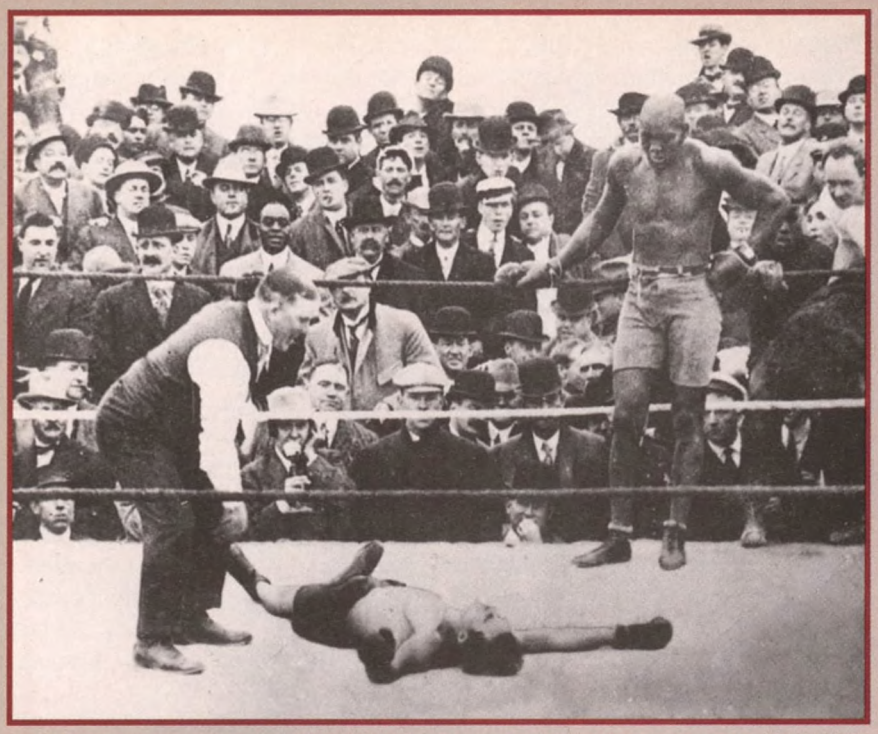
By the 1930s, when the original eight weight classes were firmly in place, Henry Armstrong found himself fighting in the shadow of Joe Louis. Armstrong's managers wanted him to stand out, so they hit on the idea of holding world titles simultaneously in three different divisions. While still holding the featherweight title, Armstrong



Frenchman Georges Carpentier turned pro as a flyweight at age 14, went on to win the light heavyweight championship, and eventually fought Jack Dempsey for the heavyweight title.



Perhaps the best fighter to compare with Manny Pacquiao is Hall of Famer Jimmy McLarnin, who turned pro as a featherweight and ended up winning the welterweight championship.



Jack Johnson watches as referee Jack Welch counts out middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel in the 12th round of their 1909 title bout. Johnson held a 35-pound weight advantage.

defeated welterweight champion Barney Ross, and two months later beat Lou Ambers for the lightweight crown. It was an astonishing feat, but had he not been fighting in the Louis era, he might not have bothered.

"Homicide Hank" spent most of his welterweight reign weighing approximately 135. He consumed steak and beer for almost every meal, but still struggled to reach the welterweight limit. On the day of a weigh-in, Armstrong would guzzle water until he could be heard sloshing up to the scales like a giant water balloon. Just to make sure Armstrong would reach the agreed upon weight, his trainer would stand behind him, stepping on the scale to add a few pounds. Armstrong weighed only 142 when he challenged Ceferino Garcia for the *middleweight* crown. Armstrong nearly won that title, too, but had to settle for a suspect draw.

Armstrong, like Walker and Walcott, was successful against bigger men because of his buzz saw style. Advantages in size go out the window when you're faced with a punching machine. Pacquiao has a buzz saw style of his own, and no one doubts that he will come at De La Hoya in the best Henry Armstrong tradition.

What people worry about regarding Pacquiao is that he began his career as a junior flyweight, creating questions as to whether his tiny frame will measure up against De La Hoya, who started out as a junior lightweight. But Pacquiao's dizzying ascent from boxing's second lightest weight category is not unprecedented.

Georges Carpentier may hold some kind of record as far as fighting in ever increasing weight groups, starting out as a 14-year-old flyweight and eventually challenging Jack Dempsey for the heavyweight title. Carpentier wasn't always successful against his larger opponents, but he did beat some good big men, including "Bombardier" Billy Wells.

Pacquiao probably has more in common with Jimmy McLarnin, who began his career at flyweight and battled his way up to the welterweight championship. As a welterweight, McLarnin took part in some of the most memorable battles of the 1930s.

The physical similarities between

After becoming the first light heavyweight champion to successfully challenge for the heavyweight title, Michael Spinks knocked out Gerry Cooney, who outweighed him by more than 37 pounds.

Pacquiao and some fighters of the past suggest that Pacquiao's gamble is not entirely daft. At 5'6½", Pacquiao is an inch taller than Armstrong was, and his 67-inch reach is identical to Armstrong's. McLarnin was also 5'6", with a 67-inch reach. Barney Ross, a former featherweight who came up to welterweight, was 5'7" with a 67-inch reach. Roberto Duran, who started at 119 and fought at welterweight and beyond, was 5'7" with a 66-inch arm span.

But while "Pac-Man" may have the bone structure to make a reasonable welterweight, his challenge of De La Hoya is risky in that he hasn't worked his way up to it. Fighters too numerous to mention have found success by taking a few tune-ups to get comfortable in their new weight class, but Pacquiao has fought only once at 135, and now he's trying 147 without even a test run at 140. Like so many others in this story, Pacquiao's choice has been influenced by his era, which happens to be the De La Hoya era. Pacquiao simply wants a shot at history (and major moolah) before De La Hoya retires. But historically, when small fighters hastily bridge weight classes for the sake of a superfight, they've often ended up on their backs.

In 1909, America's search for a Great White Hope to dethrone heavyweight king Jack Johnson lead directly to middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel. Johnson stopped Ketchel in the 11th, knocking out several of his teeth in the process. Would Ketchel have benefited from a tune-up? Probably not.

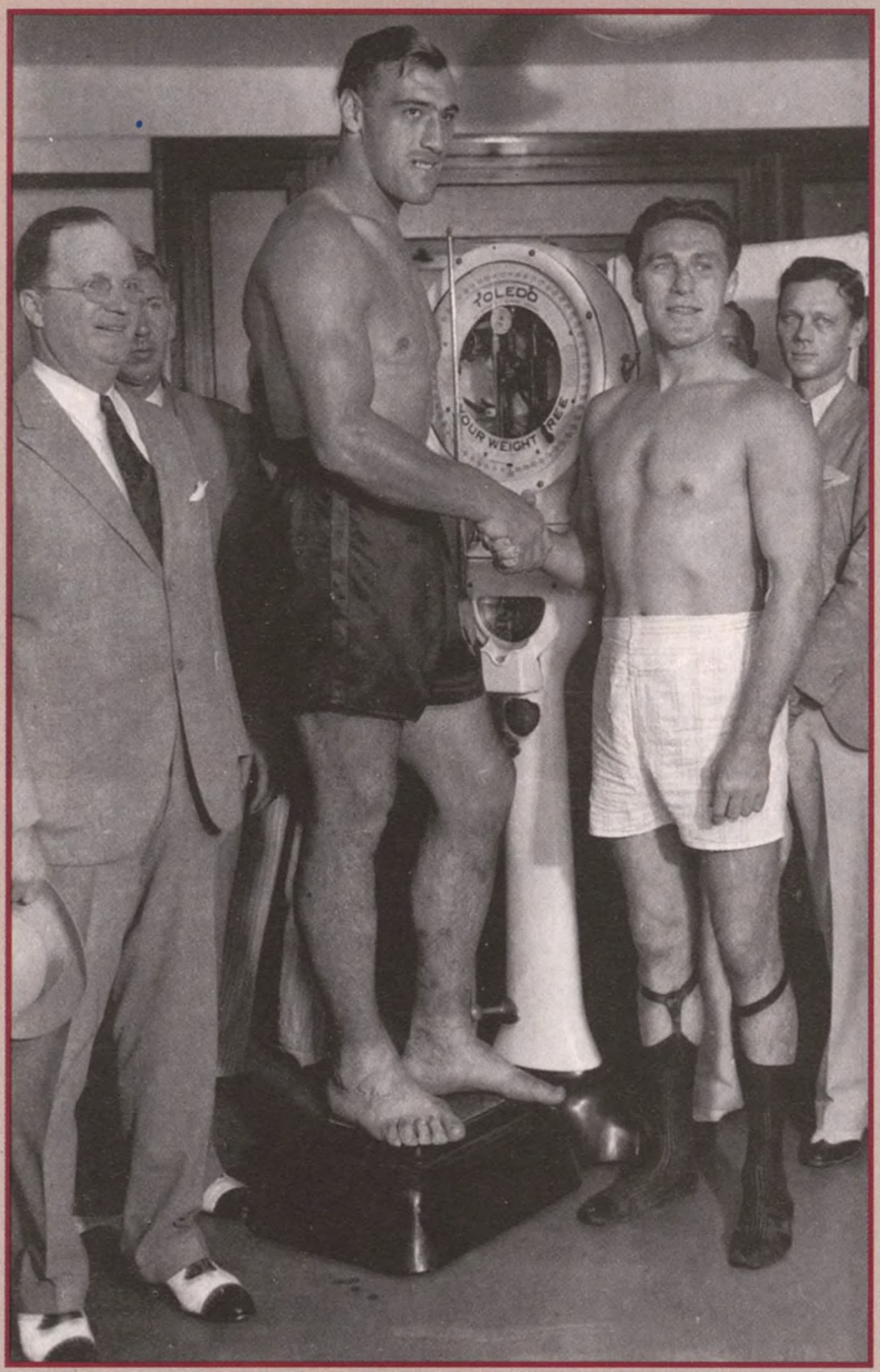
Moving ahead many decades to 1974, welterweight champion Jose Napoles dispensed with a tune-up when he faced middleweight champion Carlos Monzon. But Napoles was no Mickey Walker—his corner stopped the bout after the sixth. The Ring's A. J. Tree reported, "The deciding factor in the outcome was the inherent physical strength of Monzon as compared to Napoles, who wilted both mentally and physically when his early best efforts had no apparent effect on the middleweight champ."

But before we blindly acknowledge that smaller fighters can't win in a game

PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Spinks' success at heavyweight prompted a lot of lighter-weight fighters to try to duplicate his feat, not always with the most aesthetically pleasing results. Here's what James Toney looked like beating Doug DeWitt at 168 pounds in 1992 (above) and strolling back to his corner during his 2006 fight with Hasim Rahman, weighing 237 (below).

PHOTOS BY AL BELLO



Tommy Loughran weighed in at 184 pounds for his title bout with the 270-pound Primo Carnera. But in this case, the much larger man prevailed, successfully defending the heavyweight title.

of "you hit me, and I'll hit you," we should remember the year 1986, when light heavyweight champion Michael Spinks challenged heavyweight boss Larry Holmes. Spinks, with assistance from conditioning guru Mackie Shilstone, added some weight and fought a cunning, awkward fight, winning via split decision. He not only ended the streak of light heavyweights failing against heavyweight champions, he did so sans tune-up, and changed forever the notion about smaller fighters challenging above their weight class.

Spinks' win heralded a new era, inspiring 20 years' worth of middleweights, light heavyweights, and cruiserweights to invade the heavyweight ranks, from Michael Moorer and James Toney, to Evander Holyfield, Chris Byrd, and Roy Jones. It was an era where fighters added weight by methods both legal and illegal (and in some cases, they just ate their way up to heavyweight). But Spinks' win over Holmes also has a special pertinence to Pacquiao-De La Hoya.

Like De La Hoya, Holmes was a 35-year-old millionaire thinking about retirement. Spinks was a handpicked opponent, chosen because Holmes was on the verge of breaking Rocky Marciano's 49-bout undefeated streak and wanted an easy mark. Some believe Pacquiao has been chosen to be part of Oscar's ongoing "farewell tour" for the same reason. Holmes ended up embarrassed, frustrated by his inability to hurt his smaller opponent. He'd bragged beforehand that even his left jab would wobble Spinks, but the joke was on Larry, because despite his being a heavyweight, he no longer packed a heavyweight wallop. Like De La Hoya, Holmes had a history of hand injuries.

Spinks defeated Holmes a second time, and then scored kayos over the little-known Steffen Tangstad and the ring-rusty Gerry Cooney. Spinks may not have felt a real heavyweight punch until he faced Mike Tyson. We all remember how that played out, with Spinks crumbling in 91 seconds. A similar case had happened decades earlier, when light heavyweight Billy Conn triumphed over soft-punching heavyweights like Danny Hassett, Bob Pastor, and Al McCoy, but when he fought knockout artist Joe Louis, it was lights out for the "Pittsburgh Kid."

When the bigger man isn't a great puncher, the playing field levels off. If De La Hoya can't hurt Pacquiao, the bout will be decided not by size, but by the factors that decide all good fights: durability, speed, skill, strategy, courage, and stamina.

Of course, every theory has its glitches. When brilliant light heavyweight Tommy Loughran fought the enormous Primo Carnera, who by most accounts punched like an old lady, Loughran lost on points. Loughran simply couldn't deal with Carnera's tactic of stepping on his feet. We're not sure if Primo ever said, "Da style make-a da fight," but he may have had that in mind. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

USA BOXING CONGRATULATES **DEONTAY WILDER** FOR HIS BRONZE MEDAL WIN IN BEIJING

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USA BOXING

AMERICA'S BEST ATHLETES

TAKING A BEATING IN BEIJING

The U.S. boxing team's worst showing ever at the Olympic Games is typified by flyweight Rau'shee Warren's loss to South Korea's Ok Sung Lee in the American's first bout in Beijing (right), and the tears shed by Demetrius Andrade after being defeated in the welterweight quarterfinals (far right).

PHOTOS BY JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY

OUR FIVE-POINT PLAN FOR A U.S. Olympic Comeback

By David Mayo

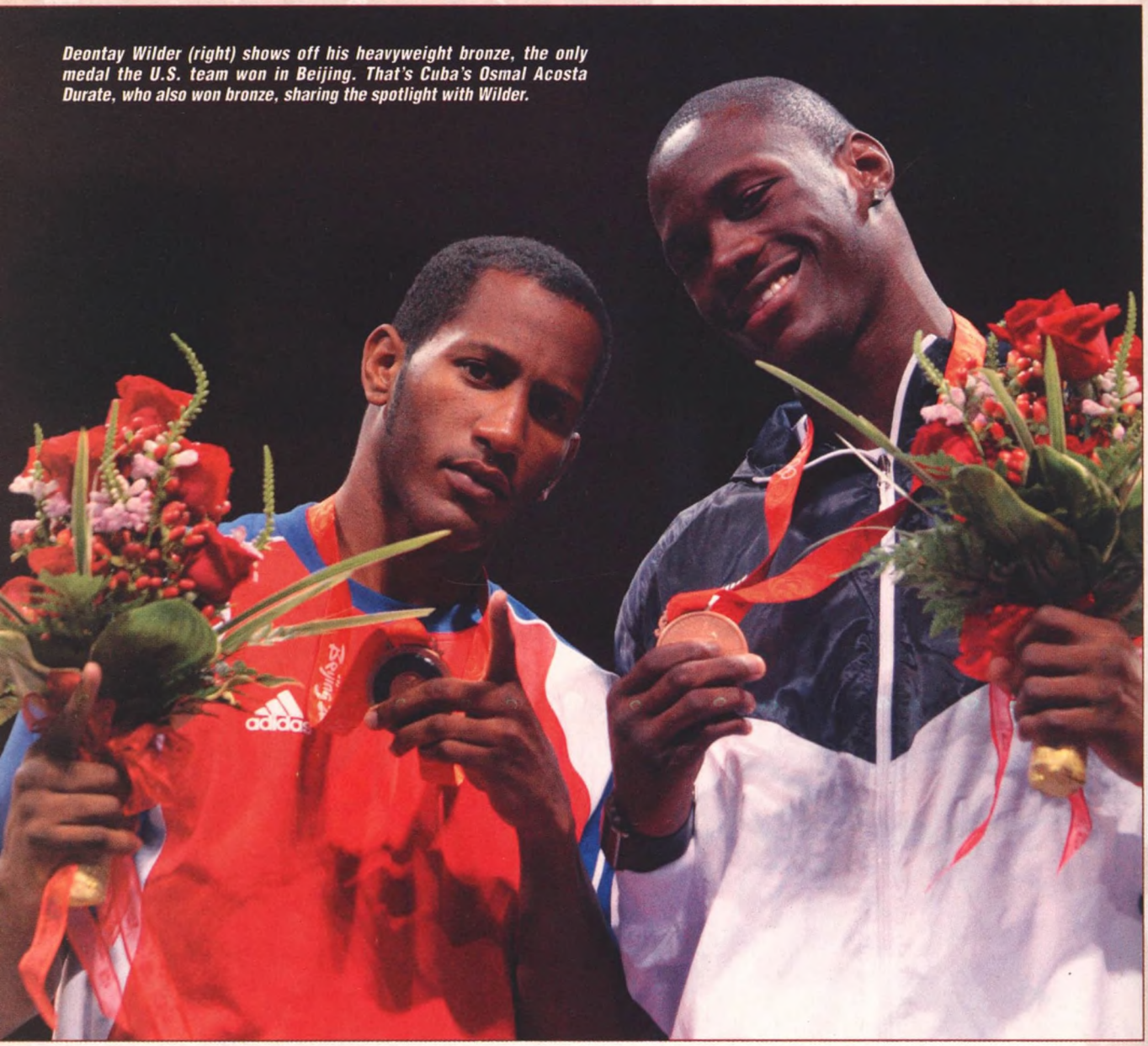
USA Boxing had a plan for the Olympics and followed it without fail, until the Beijing Games themselves, when failure was just about all the Americans managed.

While few expected a medals windfall, the unforeseen, unmitigated disaster of the 2008 United States Olympic team usurped anything even the most ardent critics of American amateur boxing's deterioration could have anticipated. The unpredictability of the computer scoring system became the central focus for much of the Olympics. When that wasn't the focus, the predictability of the American boxers' struggles in coping with it often took its place.

The worst Olympic showing by any U.S. boxing team. That is the legacy of the youthful nine-man team, none older than 23, that took home the grand total of one bronze medal.

It did not go unnoticed that the boxer least exposed to the highly politicized U.S. amateur boxing gristmill happened to produce the best Olympic result. That honor went to heavyweight Deontay Wilder, an Alabaman who took up boxing less than three years before the Beijing Games, after his daughter was born with spina bifida and he had to quit playing college basketball.

The worst previous showing by any American boxing team was a single silver medal, in 1948. The only Olympics without an American medalist of any sort were during the 1980 Moscow boycott, and when the U.S. did not send a boxing team to the 1908 Games.



Deontay Wilder (right) shows off his heavyweight bronze, the only medal the U.S. team won in Beijing. That's Cuba's Osmal Acosta Durate, who also won bronze, sharing the spotlight with Wilder.

PHOTO BY JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Other than those years of U.S. non-participation, there never had been an Olympic gold-medal boxing round contested entirely without Americans, until Beijing.

Oh, there were plenty of other distractions. China won its first two gold medals in Olympic boxing, to the delight of the home crowd at Beijing Workers' Gymnasium, a 13,000-seat facility built in 1961 for the World Table Tennis Championships. The Dominican Republic and Mongolia each produced its first boxing gold medalist. Ireland took three medals, after just nine in all previous Olympic boxing competitions. Armenia, India, and Mauritius all scored their first Olympic boxing medals.

Many of those achievements were greased by the absence of the two greatest Olympic boxing powers, the U.S. and Cuba, from the top of the medal stand. Cuba's failure was relative; it won the most boxing medals in Beijing (eight) though it lost all four finals it reached and was shut out of Olympic gold for the first time since 1988.

The U.S. failure requires no such caveats or disclaimers. It was absolute and stark. Three Americans lost first-round bouts, including flyweight Rau'shee Warren, who also lost his opening bout at Athens in 2004. A fourth, bantamweight Gary Russell Jr., did not compete at all, withdrawing on the day of Opening Ceremonies after collapsing while working to make the 119-pound limit.

The eight boxers who defeated the Americans included four medalists but only one gold medalist, British middleweight James Degale, who defeated Shawn Estrada in a second-round bout. The scoring system became a near-immediate scapegoat, spawned from one-point and two-point margins eliminating four U.S. boxers, including defending world champions Warren and welterweight Demetrius Andrade, along with light flyweight Luis Yanez and featherweight Raynell Williams.

To be sure, the scoring system, instituted as a knee-jerk response that has twitched for 20 years since Roy Jones' disputed 1988 Olympic loss, is unworkable and threatens boxing's position in the Olympic roster

(although it was retained for 2012, while baseball and softball became the first medal sports cut from the lineup since polo in 1932), as well as what remains of the amateur sport's international relevance.

Fans were not the only ones who grew weary of seeing clear scoring blows go uncounted. Rudi Obreja of Romania, a technical delegate to the boxing competition, accused AIBA officials of rigging the computerized assignment of officials and immediately was suspended for abrogating the international body's protocol governing disciplinary and protest procedures. That is to say, Obreja talked when he shouldn't have. As for the merit of his accusations, another technical delegate, Terry Smith, confirmed that boxing administrators had "suspicions" about tournament oversight and that he personally heard rumors of an attempt to gerrymander officials' assignments in early-summer.

Nevertheless, the Americans' howls rang almost hollow against the many voices decrying both the judges and officials. With the exception of the 11 men atop the medal stand, it seemed everyone in Beijing felt shafted.

And why did the Americans deserve better? Andrade, the only U.S. boxer besides Wilder to reach the quarterfinals, and considered the team's best hope going into the Beijing Games, hardly threw a punch and did not score in the first round of his 11-9 loss to Korean Jungjoo Kim. Yanez, trailing most of the way in his second-round bout, landed four scoring punches and stole the lead in the first 30 seconds of the third round against Mongolia's Serdamba Purevdorj, yet did little else in an 8-7 loss.

The Americans also benefited from some close calls. Andrade won by two points and Yanez by three in their opening bouts. And Wilder, who needed only two victories to reach the medal round because of a small heavyweight entry field, got there by virtue of a tiebreaker in a 10-10 quarterfinal.

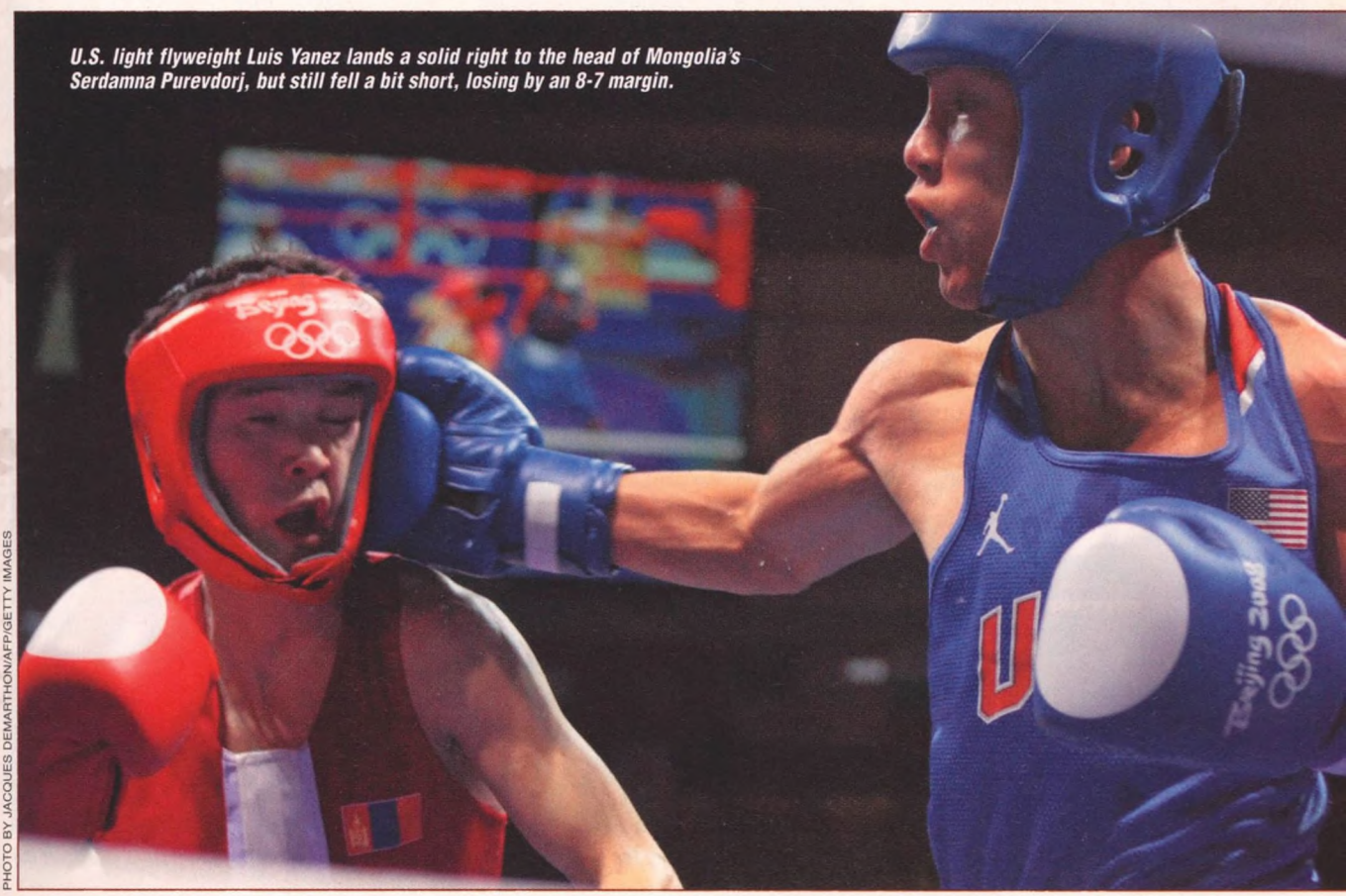
Some of the losses had absolutely nothing to do with the computer. Lightweight Sadam Ali and light welterweight Javier Molina were not competitive in their only Olympic appearances, losing by scores of 20-5 and 14-1, respectively. Molina was diagnosed with a hole in his lung after his bout, which left an open question regarding why he was allowed to compete, particularly when head coach Dan Campbell said he knew about the condition beforehand, realized after one round that Molina couldn't execute, and would have stopped the bout after two rounds if not for the boxer's protests.

That's what went wrong.

To fix it could require a complete overhaul of how USA Boxing has approached the last five Olympiads, during which Americans have produced just three gold medalists—Oscar De La Hoya in 1992, David Reid in 1996, and Andre Ward in 2004.

Here, then, are five suggestions that could improve the situation:

FIGHT IN-HOUSE: One of the most peculiar trends in U.S. amateur boxing the last decade is the de facto prohibition on Olympians entering major national tournaments after the team is selected. Because the 2008 team was chosen so early, its members did not participate in any of the three



U.S. light flyweight Luis Yanez lands a solid right to the head of Mongolia's Serdamna Purevdorj, but still fell a bit short, losing by an 8-7 margin.

PHOTO BY JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

traditional major tournaments for more than a year, missing the 2007 Police Athletic League tournament, the 2008 National Golden Gloves, and even the 2008 U.S. Championships, the flagship tournament of USA Boxing.

The U.S. boxers competed against a wide array of international opponents during their year training together. They had a test event in Beijing, nine months before the Olympics. They competed in dual meets against Australia, England, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and a China-Kazakhstan combined team. But they were not exposed to their own country's best competition after they were identified, a concept adhered to throughout this decade, with the result of one gold medal in three Olympiads.

GO TO SCHOOL: Marquette, Michigan, is a beautiful place, particularly in July and August, when you can feel fairly certain it won't snow. For about 15 minutes each summer, Lake Superior almost gets warm enough for swimming. The U.S. Olympic Education Center's boxing program at Northern Michigan University was reinstated this summer, after budget cuts eliminated it at the beginning of the year, which restores a common destination point for elite, education-minded amateurs.

Still, the cultural disconnect between the northern tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the urban centers, where boxing gyms tend to form, can be too dramatic for many youngsters to consider. Restoring the USOEC boxing program after it lost funding was an important step.

Expanding the elite scholarship program to offer more educational opportunities at more geographically diverse locations, along with appropriate subsidies tied to ongoing participation and success in traditional Olympic-qualifying tournaments, could be another. Amateur boxing recruitment in the U.S. typically is a passive process with few incentives. Decentralizing the scholarship program to include one or two more regional, university-based training centers might help boost first-time participation while also appealing to elite amateurs for whom four winters at Northern Michigan, in exchange for an Olympic dream that might burst anyway, is enough to make some of the best ones turn professional.

STAY LOCAL: Campbell was adamant in keeping with USA Boxing philosophy that centralizing the coaching system, to the exclusion of Olympians' original trainers, is the only way to go. Then Campbell went, announcing his retirement as national director of coaching on September 5. According to Campbell, he was asked to step down, reportedly saying, "They didn't want me in the job to begin with. And they let me know all

PHOTO BY VLADIMIR RYS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Romania's Georgian Popescu knocks down Sadam Ali en route to a beating the U.S. light welterweight. Ali, the first Arab-American to represent the U.S. in the Olympics lost by a wide 20-5 margin.

PHOTO BY: JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Bulgaria's Boris Georgiev's arm is raised in victory following his one-sided victory over the U.S.'s Javier Molina. After the bout, Molina was diagnosed as having a hole in his lung.

along that if the team didn't do well, then I was out."

The team didn't do well—Campbell was out. Campbell and the team clashed over a number of issues. One of the biggest points of contention was Campbell's insistence that the team train exclusively at the U.S. Olympic Center, in Colorado Springs, and his refusal to accept input from their original coaches.

"When kids go home, they go back to activities we don't allow in Colorado Springs," Campbell said before the Beijing Games began. "They hang out with their friends, they get back in their old gyms, with their old coaches, and they start doing things the way they used to. They slip into bad habits and, once we get them back, it takes a few days to get those bad habits out."

If Beijing was the proof, then the pudding went sour.

Local trainers developed the athletes in the first place. Results from recent Olympics have demonstrated that if there is a coaching magic bullet, USA Boxing has not discovered it. It is an iffy proposition to fit any given boxer to any particular trainer once that boxer's core principles are established, much less to tailor the principles of one head coach and a small support staff to fit a team of up to 11 established boxers.

Segregating Olympians from their grass-roots coaches and familiar surroundings, in favor of coaches purportedly trained to maximize Olympic production, might sound good in theory, but it has been a boondoggle of wasted time, money, and energy in practice—especially when the team was kept together for practically an entire year after it was selected, yet managed to produce the worst result in U.S. Olympic history.

WAIT TO DECIDE: The rush to assemble and cloister the team a year before the Beijing Games was

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to assemble and cloister the team a year before the Beijing Games was criticized widely before the Olympics. Nothing about the Americans' results did anything to quell that criticism, and the long period keeping young athletes together might have left the U.S. team stale.

Beyond that, it might not have been the best U.S. team.

Al Mitchell, the 1996 U.S. coach, said setting the 2008 team a year beforehand created one significant problem: Some of the best potential Olympians were not identified in time to qualify. Mitchell declined to identify his suspects.

Some identified themselves, like Ernesto Garza, a sizzling 19-year-old bantamweight who burst onto the scene by stopping three of five opponents in his 2008 National Golden Gloves win. He could have made a dangerous Olympian (and kept Russell's weight-related collapse from occurring at all), but was unknown when the team was

PHOTO BY JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Puerto Rico's Jose Pedraza attacks Onur Sipal

TOP PRO PROSPECTS

From Laszlo Papp to Teofilo Stevenson to Felix Savon, Olympic boxing dominance does not necessarily translate to professional championships and vast riches, just as defeat did not inhibit the pro achievements of fighters from Evander Holyfield to Floyd Mayweather.

Political limitations are not always the basis for great Olympians not matching that success in the pro ranks, though they figure to keep the two Chinese gold medalists in Beijing, as well as the eight total medalists from Cuba, from cashing in on their feats.

The best 2008 Olympian, from a defensive perspective, was flyweight gold medalist Somjit Jongjohor, who won his five bouts by a 39-7 aggregate score. He even lives in Thailand, where pro boxing is a rich part of the sports landscape and 112-pounders can find plenty of work. But because he turns 34 in January, Jongjohor is not among the Beijing Olympians high on the list of pro prospects, though these are:

•Badar-Uugan Enkhbat (Mongolia, bantamweight): The 23-year-old won his country's first boxing gold medal in incredibly dominant fashion, recording four double-digit victories and winning his five Olympic bouts by an aggregate score of 70-15. He said he plans to remain amateur.

•Vasyl Lomachenko (Ukraine, featherweight): Perhaps the best pro prospect in the Olympics. Confronted with his biggest potential matchup in a first-round bout, he responded with a perfectly plotted performance against Albert Selimov, to whom he'd lost in last year's World Championships, for a 14-7 win. Lomachenko also recorded the fastest of the three gold-medal stoppages, at 1:51 of the first round. In between, he won three other bouts by an aggregate score of 35-5. And he's only 20 years old.

•Jose Pedraza (Puerto Rico, lightweight): Not all good prospects leave the Olympics with medals. Pedraza lost a second-round bout, 13-9, to France's Daouda Sow, who settled for silver after a two-point loss to Russia's Alexey Tishchenko. All three might be pro prospects. But Tishchenko is 24, Sow is 25, and Pedraza is a tender 19, younger by months than countryman Miguel Cotto was at the 2000 Games. Besides the left hook and bodypunching ability you might expect, Pedraza also is defensively sound.

•Bakhyt Sarsekbayev (Kazakhstan, welterweight): A shaky choice because the gold medalist turns 27 in November. Still, he was so good in Beijing, with one stoppage and four solid decisions, including an 18-9 final over Cuba's Carlos Banteaux, that he demands inclusion.

•James Degale (Great Britain, middleweight): The native of Sheffield, England, is just 22 years old, and proved adept at handling roughhousers and tactical boxers alike

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Britain's James Degale took home middleweight gold

in winning gold. He won his first four bouts and then upset Cuba's Emilio Correa Jr., son of the 1972 gold medalist, in the Olympic final.

•Kenny Egan (Ireland, light heavyweight): Took a silver medal after a close loss to China's Xiaoping Zhang in the final. Until then, the 26-year-old demonstrated one of the best mixes of offensive and defensive prowess among any big man in Beijing, winning by scores of 22-2, 10-2, 8-0, and 10-3.

•Oleksandr Usyk (Ukraine, heavyweight): Dropped a second-round decision, 7-4, to eventual silver medalist and 2007 World Champion Clemente Russo of Italy, after scoring a 19-point win in his first bout. At 21 years old and standing 6'3", Usyk's frame eventually can carry well more than 201 pounds. And it isn't as if a Ukrainian heavyweight is a bad bet.

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Mongolia's Badar-Uugan Enkhbat gives thanks

2008 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALISTS

Light Flyweight (48 kg/106 pounds)
Shiming Zou, China
Flyweight (51kg/112 pounds)
Somjit Jongjohor, Thailand
Bantamweight (54 kg/119 pounds)
Badar-Uugan Enkhbat, Mongolia
Featherweight (57 kg/125 pounds)
Vasyl Lomachenko, Ukraine
Lightweight (60 kg/132 pounds)
Alexey Tishchenko, Russia
Light Welterweight (64 kg/141 pounds)
Felix Diaz, Dominican Republic
Welterweight (69 kg/152 pounds)
Bakhyt Sarsekbayev, Kazakhstan
Middleweight (75 kg/165 pounds)
James Degale, Great Britain
Light Heavyweight (81 kg/178 pounds)
Xiaoping Zhang, China
Heavyweight (91 kg/201 pounds)
Rakhim Chakhkiev, Russia
Super Heavyweight (more than 91 kg/201 pounds)
Roberto Cammarelle, Italy

selected in August 2007. Louis Byrd, an 18-year-old light flyweight, won both the U.S. Championships and National Golden Gloves this year, but came along too late to unseat Yanez.

Selecting the team during its Olympic year would require the U.S. Championships and National Golden Gloves to be contested about three months earlier than usual, allowing for the Olympic Trials to occur before such pre-Olympic events as the Americas Qualifiers. But that's how it used to work every Olympic year, back when the U.S. used to win gold medals.

Quite simply, while the Olympians were stashed away in Colorado, a number of young boxers improved in 2008, some of whom might have proven better Olympic candidates than the rubber-stamped 2007 selections.

PLAY THE GAME: Complaints about the computer scoring system were as omnipresent as Campbell's toothpick in Beijing. Few understand it. Even fewer like it. But until AIBA pulls the plug on a badly failed experiment, prompted by one rigged fight 20 years ago in Korea that didn't stir nearly the anguish that the computerized response has, everyone has to live by it.

The computer system cannot be justified, but in some cases might be tactically outsmarted, if one can suspend disbelief long enough. That means unlearn what you know, then relearn it to fit a misguided model.

The common mantra that clean punching wins fights is out the window in the Olympics, where a clean jab rarely hits the scoreboard and a clean body shot rarer still.

What scores in the Olympics are flurries, which create enough movement that they often entice three judges to push their scoring buttons within one second of each other, in the thought that something must have scored. Get in, score quickly and in combination, get out, use athleticism, build a lead, then sit on it. It may not be a formula conducive to great Olympic memories of a bygone era, but it's the Olympic ideal in boxing today.

It also appeared beyond the grasp of the American boxers, though not because their coaches didn't implore them. Yanez was exhorted to throw more punches during his loss. Andrade, the world champion, went through an entire opening round of an Olympic bout without scoring, abandoned his work-off-the-jab principles, then grew overanxious as his slothful approach led him into an unrecoverable deficit. Even Wilder, the lone U.S. medalist, was shut down offensively in a 7-1 semifinal loss to Italy's Clemente Russo.

Out of 272-bracketed bouts, only five ended in shutouts. If not for a single scoring blow by Wilder in the fourth round against Russo, after he was hopelessly behind, the one boxer who helped the U.S. avoid a shutout loss would have finished with one of his own.

The last time the U.S. opted not to take a boxing team to the Olympics in a non-boycott year was 1908 in London. When the 2012 Games reconvene there in four years, the nation might as well adopt that position again, if its amateur boxing system does not address some of the hard-line positions that have wasted considerable energy in failed Olympic pursuits. ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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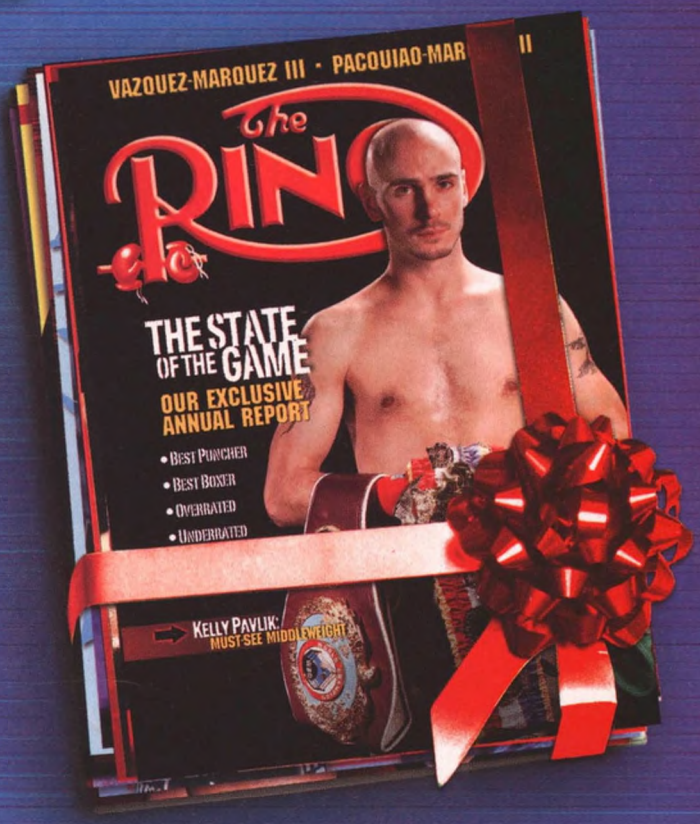

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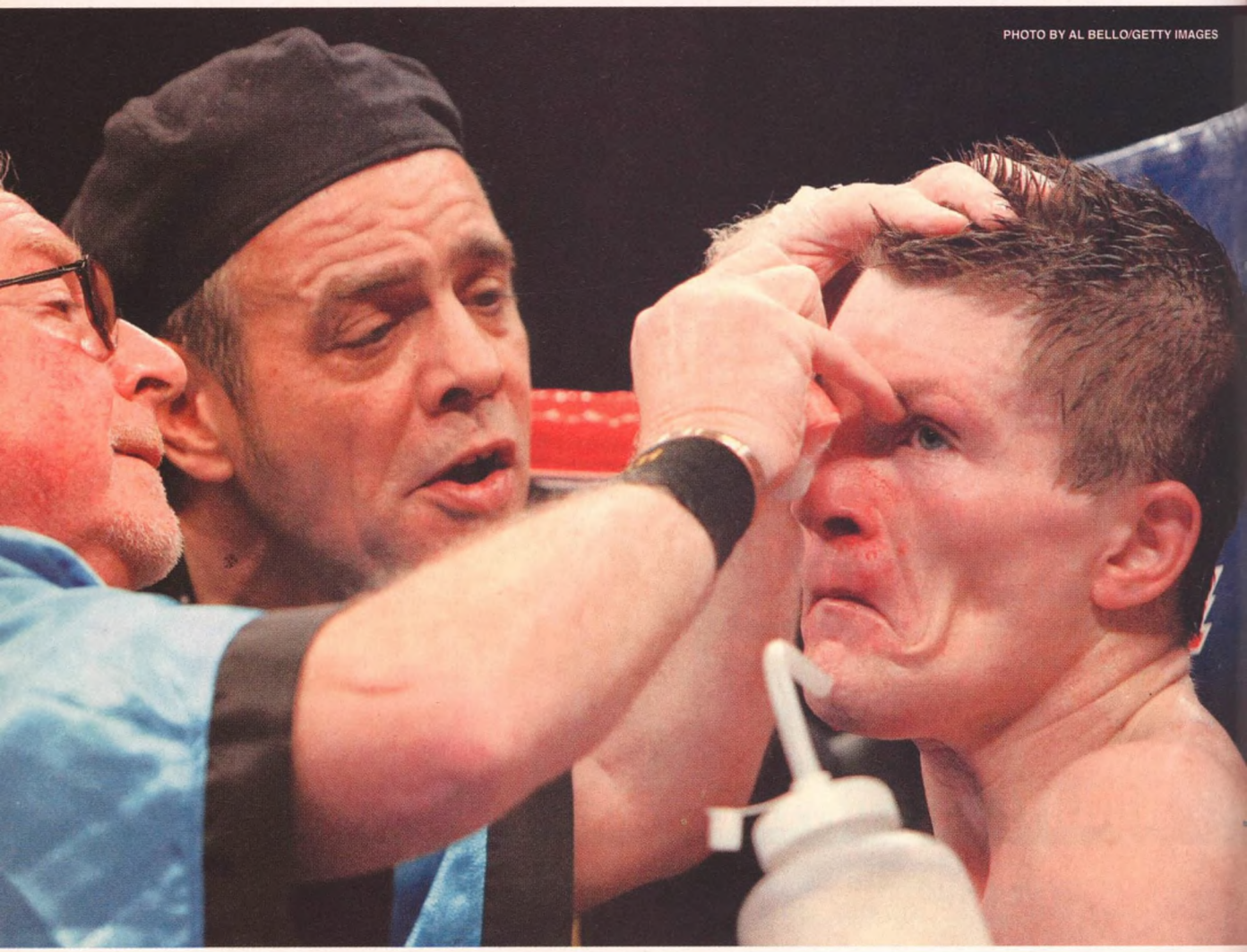


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Longtime trainer Billy Graham (above, wearing hat) gives Hatton advice between rounds of the Mayweather fight. He will not be in Ricky's corner for the upcoming Malignaggi bout. After training Hatton for 45 fights, Graham has been replaced by Floyd Mayweather Sr. (opposite page).

EX-TRAINER STILL IN

HATTON'S CORNER

"If Ricky Is On Form, He Will Take Malignaggi Apart"

By Brian Doogan

As he prepared to enter training camp for his 46th professional bout, Ricky Hatton acknowledged the irony of his venture into virgin territory. At 29 years old, he is a veteran participant in big fights, having won the world junior welterweight championship against Kostya Tszyu in 2005 and having challenged world welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather last year, his only defeat. He has made four title defenses and accumulated in excess of $50-million since making his debut against Colin McAuley in front of "a few hardy souls" just before midnight on September 11, 1997, at the Kingsway Leisure Centre in Widnes.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY BRYAN HARAWAY/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton claims that the reason he parted with Graham was because his former trainer is no longer physically fit to handle such taxing chores as working the pads. For recent bouts, Graham has needed painkilling injections to get the job done.

But when Hatton puts his world junior welterweight title on the line against challenger Paulie Malignaggi on November 22 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, he will be without Billy Graham in his corner for the first time. "The Preacher" and "The Hitman" announced that they were going their separate ways in July, a couple of months after Hatton's homecoming against Juan Lazcano, which drew 57,000 raucous fans to the City of Manchester Stadium.

How significant might this be? Will it affect Hatton's preparation and performance? Can Hatton's new trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr., support Hatton through the climax of his career, which may include a superfight against Manny Pacquiao, depending on what happens between the Filipino and Oscar De La Hoya on December 6, in the same, assured way in which Graham helped him to realize his potential?

How close were Hatton and Graham? Close enough for Graham to hold on to the gloves that Hatton wore on the night he fought McAuley and to send them to him in a taxi two nights before he fought Tszyu.

"I thought I'd lost these gloves, but Billy had them all along," Hatton recalled. "He sent them to me, all cased up with an engraved message at the bottom: 'From the first day I saw you, I knew this day would

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton tags Juan Lazcano with a right hand during their May bout in Manchester. Although Hatton retained the junior welterweight championship via unanimous decision, it was far from his best performance. Both Hatton and Graham claim that a virus sapped the champ's strength.

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Although he managed to hang on to the IBF 140-pound belt via split decision over Lovemore Ndou, Malignaggi also had a tough night on the Hatton-Lazcano bill in Manchester. Graham is confident Hatton will prevail when he faces Malignaggi on November 22.

come. Luv yer, Billy.' That brought a tear to my eye, and to be reminded of where I'd come from to where I was at that moment gave me extra motivation, if extra motivation was needed, to beat Tszyu."

They were close enough to sleep in the same bed "in the s__tiest motel in Las Vegas" when all they had was $50, having missed their flight home after watching Tszyu knock out Zab Judah. Close enough to make a run for it out of their hotel when the money had dried up altogether and they could not pay the bill following a fight and a long drinking session in Oberhausen, Germany. Inevitably, all those years and shared experiences meant that their separation was painful.

"I love Billy, but I can't have a trainer who has admitted umpteen times that he is physically beaten," Hatton told *News Of The World* reporter Steve Lillis in August. "How can I expect him to be okay for the next 12 weeks while I'm preparing to fight Malignaggi? How do I know how hard or correctly I'm punching when he has [painkilling] needles and cannot feel his hands when we're on the pads?"

Retired and spending time with his daughter and her friend on a five-acre pad that he owns in Georgia, a 20-minute car ride from Evander Holyfield's opulently furnished mansion on the outskirts of Atlanta, Graham would not be drawn into talking about the detail of the split. In various accounts he has said that he was sacked, while Hatton has suggested that they reached a mutual decision.

But Graham was happy to discuss with THE RING his thoughts on Hatton-Malignaggi and a range of issues, including Hatton's lifestyle and why he would have preferred to see Hatton retire after his bout with Lazcano, when Graham could see from the corner that "on a couple of occasions he was really in danger of getting done."

Hatton also spoke to THE RING and revealed that a chest infection, which lingered for weeks, had left him depleted and unable to put in the kind of work ahead of the Lazcano bout that he would have done, if he had been fit.

"I normally wrap up my training camp by doing 15 rounds on the bodybag, but the most I did throughout that camp was six rounds," said Hatton, an admission that Graham corroborated.

"If I had been in control, I would have pulled him out. The fight would not have taken place when it did," said Graham. "Ricky was nothing short of heroic, given the way in which he had to push himself through training. I knew that it would not be a vintage Ricky Hatton performance. Long before he got into trouble in the eighth and 10th rounds, in fact it was during the fourth, I turned to Mick Williamson, the cutman, and asked him, 'Do you think Ricky's slowing?' It was a rhetorical question because I knew the answer myself. He was definitely slowing because it wasn't the real Ricky Hatton in there that night.

"Don't get me wrong; I'm not making little of what Lazcano did. I expected Lazcano to be tough, but the virus had sapped too much of Ricky's strength. He was affected early in the camp and he couldn't shake it off. He tried to continue sparring, even though I didn't

want him to, until I had to put my foot down because the sparring was going worse and worse. Like I say, if it had been down to me, he wouldn't have got in the ring that night.

"He started off great, but then he disintegrated. I had told him beforehand that there were going to be some scary moments and he would have to be able to adapt. I wanted him to forget about pleasing the crowd, he was a mile in front on points, but Ricky has this gung-ho attitude and he wants to please the crowd, so he got caught and he was rocked to his boots. People don't realize how brave he was that night or the way in which he had been affected by everything."

Hatton admitted that it was the most nervous he had ever felt before a fight. "Stupid things were going through my head," he revealed. "I was asking myself, *Am I going to be able to take a punch anymore after Floyd Mayweather knocked me out?* There was a little bit of panic a couple of times when I got hit, and the whole situation was very worrying for me because of the virus and the fact that I was coming back from a defeat. I believe the hardest one is out of the way now, no doubt about it."

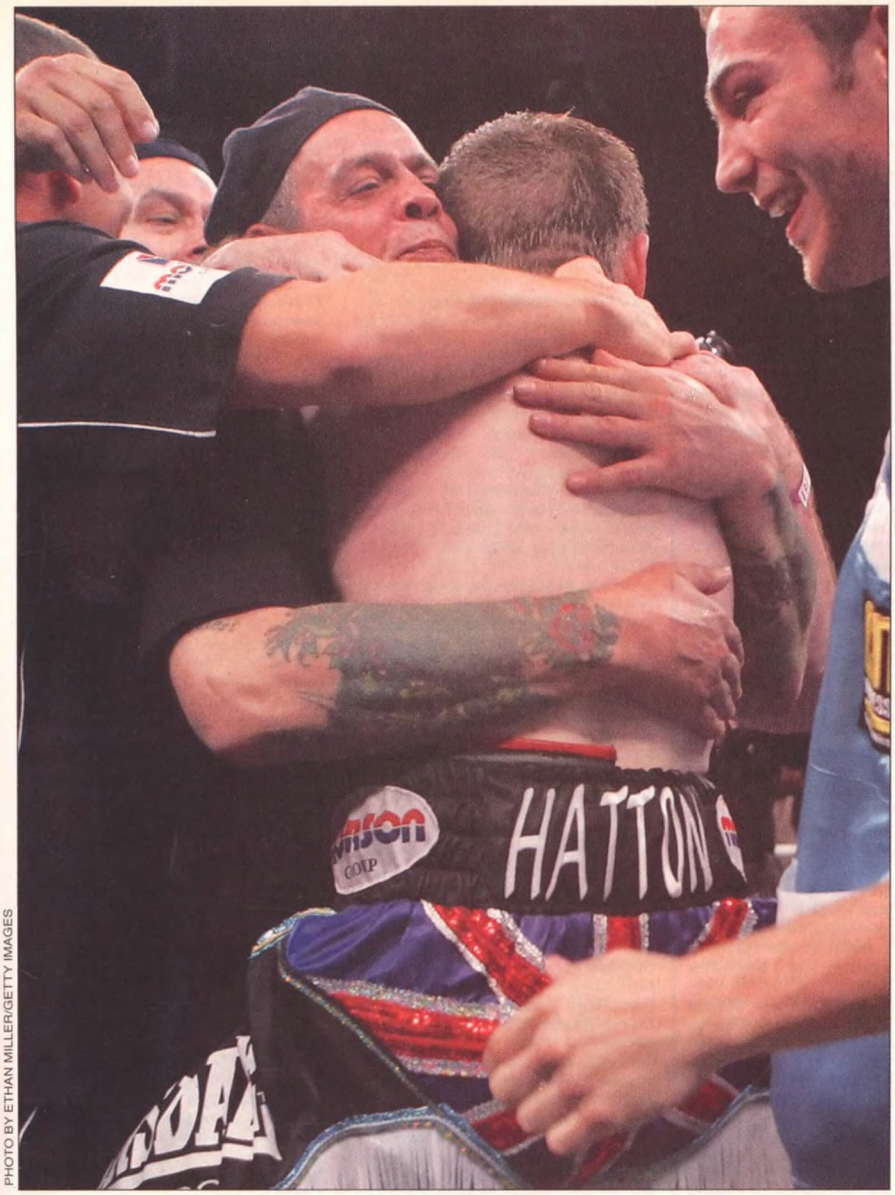
Malignaggi's bravery was established during his points defeat against Miguel Cotto, in June 2006, when he suffered a swollen jaw, a cut above the left eye, and a swelling in his left cheekbone that turned out to be a broken bone. But in his most recent performances, against Herman Ngoudjo and Lovemore Ndou, the New Yorker has been a vexing version of Naseem Hamed without the prodigious punch. In 26 fights he has stopped only five opponents. Will his slickness alone be enough to trouble Hatton? Graham, a Malignaggi fan, does not think so.

"This is a relatively safe fight for Ricky, based on the form of the two fighters," Graham insisted. "If Ricky is on form, he will take Malignaggi apart. Malignaggi is a good, clever boxer and he is tougher than he looks. The way he stood up to Cotto's punches proved that he is hard. But Cotto was weak at 140 pounds and he should have moved up to welterweight a long time before he did. Still, Malignaggi was only trying to survive. When you try to win, you put yourself in a far more dangerous position, and I just don't see Malignaggi being a threat to Ricky. I've not been studying him because it's no longer my job, but Ricky will stop him. He will be too strong, too clever in the way he is able to cut off the ring, and Malignaggi will not have the firepower to keep him off. As soon as Ricky starts catching him with good shots to the body, the fight will be determined. Ricky stops him definitely, that's the way I see it. Take Cotto out of the equation and Ricky is the best fighter that Malignaggi has ever faced, by far. If I was in Malignaggi's corner, I'd be very worried. I don't know what I could tell him to do."

While Hatton suggested that Malignaggi "looks a bit like a nancy boy," he is under no illusion that the

PHOTO BY DAVE HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton, who has always packed on the pounds between fights by eating and drinking to excess, looks pretty chunky as he chugs a beer and chats with Oasis member Noel Gallagher at an awards luncheon in July. Even Graham admits Ricky's lifestyle will eventually "catch up" with him.



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Graham hugs Hatton following Hatton's kayo of Jose Luis Castillo in 2007. It remains to be seen whether or not Hatton will be adversely affected by Graham's absence in future fights.

New York-Italian can back up his trash talk. "He talks a fair bit of bollocks," said Hatton. "I'm well aware that he's had a hard upbringing and he's a real success story, so I won't be taking anything for granted."

But what of the way in which Hatton has let himself go between fights, allowing his weight to balloon up and down with such regularity that he could be the perfect guest for Oprah Winfrey? Was this not a contributing factor to the disheveled performance against Lazcano? Is Hatton not on the slide?

"Look, as his trainer, I have been closer to Ricky Hatton than anybody else, and I can't come to that conclusion yet," Graham declared. "Obviously, a blind man will be able to see that in the end it will catch up with him and, if I didn't know about all the problems he had before the Lazcano fight, I would be concerned. But the way he boxed in that fight was down to the virus, pure and simple, just as it was when he boxed Juan Urango. He suffered a chest infection and was very close to being pulled out, but the fight went ahead and he had to adapt and I'm proud of the way he was able to do this.

"I'm also proud of what Ricky has achieved and I'm proud of my part in his success, and the truth is that I don't want Ricky to fight on much more. I would say to him, 'Get out after this one. What else is there to prove?' In fact, I would have been quite happy to see him retire after his last fight. I don't want to see him go on and lose. He's in no danger against Malignaggi, in my opinion, and I'll be in Vegas to see it, maybe at one of the closed-circuit venues. The fans have always been great to me as well as Ricky, and I want to see them. But I don't know if there is anything else left to challenge him."

Actually, there may be. Hatton was offered the opportunity to step into the void left by Mayweather's retirement when De La Hoya was looking for another opponent, before he finally concluded the deal with Pacquiao. In fact, Ricky's father/manager, Ray Hatton, was among the first people whom Richard Schaefer, the CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, spoke to about taking up the challenge. The Hatton camps' thoughts at that time remain the same: De La Hoya is just too big to contemplate fighting him. But an encounter with Pacquiao, depending on what happens on December 6, would be a different matter.

"There's just a huge difference in size between myself and Oscar, and on the two occasions that I have moved up to welterweight, against Mayweather and Luis Collazo, I think it's been proved that it's not my weight," said Hatton. "But it's always been about challenge for me and I believe that you always have to keep striving in life. I fought the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world before and I came up short, but I would love to get the chance to do it again. Pacquiao is a fight that I would be interested in, of course, but we'll see what happens on December 6, and over the coming weeks my focus will be on Malignaggi. He's fast and he's slippery, but I'm quick on my feet, in terms of cutting off the ring. I know that if I'm not 100 percent on my game, he will beat me. But I've got too much in my armory for him, so that isn't going to happen." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

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May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win … And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

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June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Also: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

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Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom … Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

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Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

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Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Retooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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WHO NEEDS PAC-MAN?

Marquez Has The World Title ... And Plenty Of Other Options

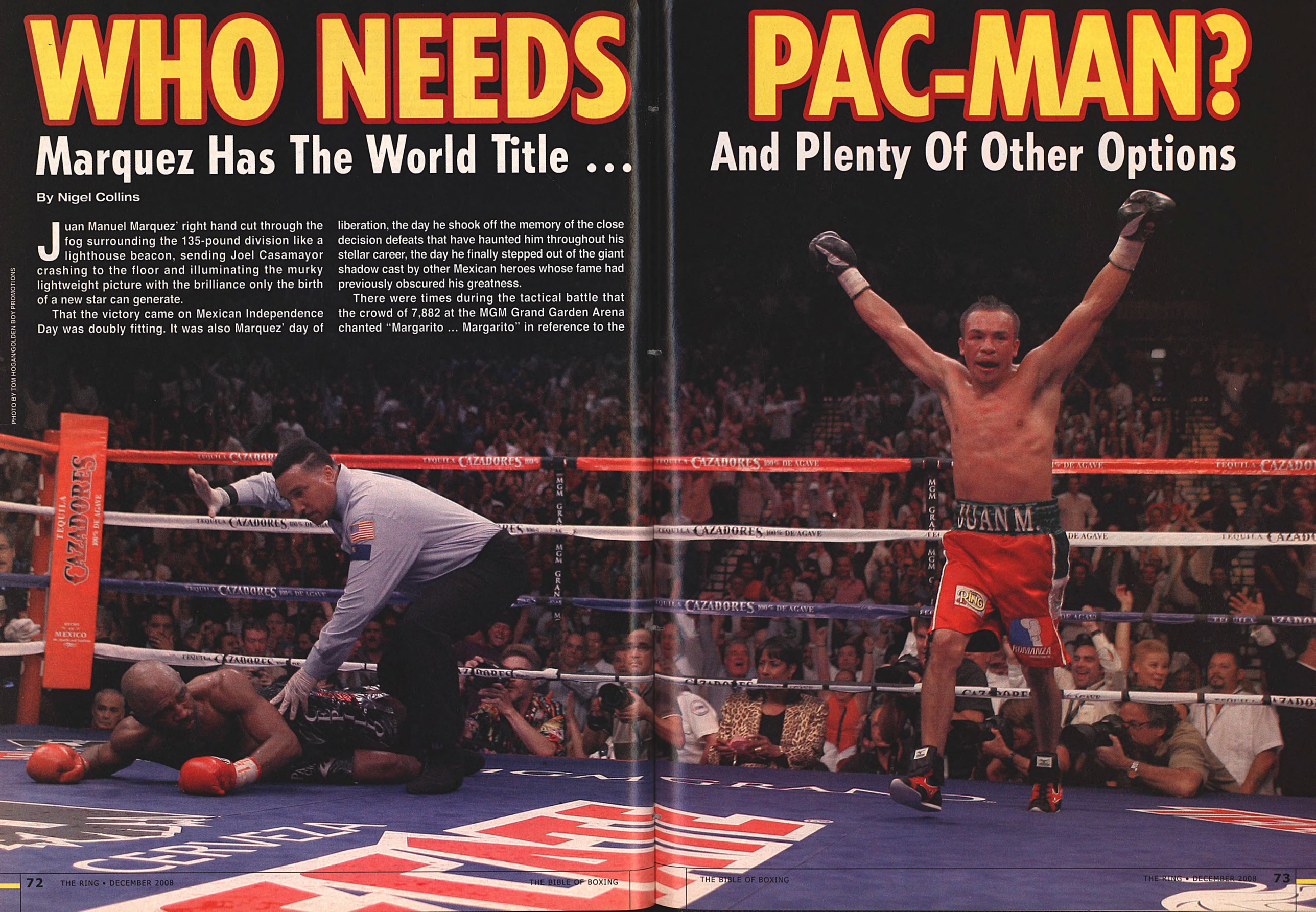
By Nigel Collins

Juan Manuel Marquez' right hand cut through the fog surrounding the 135-pound division like a lighthouse beacon, sending Joel Casamayor crashing to the floor and illuminating the murky lightweight picture with the brilliance only the birth of a new star can generate.

That the victory came on Mexican Independence Day was doubly fitting. It was also Marquez' day of liberation, the day he shook off the memory of the close decision defeats that have haunted him throughout his stellar career, the day he finally stepped out of the giant shadow cast by other Mexican heroes whose fame had previously obscured his greatness.

There were times during the tactical battle that the crowd of 7,882 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena chanted "Margarito ... Margarito" in reference to the

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS



welterweight slugger whose recent destruction of Miguel Cotto had earned him a permanent place in the hearts of Mexican fans on both sides of the border. It was as if they were reminding Marquez that if he wanted to be loved instead of respected, another close decision was not the way to go.

But when Casamayor hit the floor in the 11th round, a roar worthy of a Julio Cesar Chavez crowd rocked the arena. And when Marquez exploded with a finishing flurry that ended the fight, there was no doubt that the winner had also kayoed the ghosts of the past and entered the enchanted realm where machismo is king and the green, red, and white flag of Mexico flies from every turret.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Defending champion Casamayor did not surrender the title easily. The Cuban southpaw scored throughout the fight with his dangerous left hand, especially in the early rounds.

"I wanted to fight for all my Mexican people," said a jubilant Marquez, "and I did it!"

Marquez' victory was also highly significant beyond the personal level. It climaxed a two-week period that was supposed to feature a trio of important lightweight bouts, but ended up minus one of those matches when the Nate Campbell-Joan Guzman fight—scheduled for September 13, the same day as Marquez-Casamayor—was cancelled. Guzman, who was moving up from the 130-pound class, first failed to make weight, and then claimed he was too sick to fight anyway. The cancellation left Guzman in limbo and Campbell seething on the sidelines.

Juan Diaz, from whom Campbell had won a trio of alphabet straps, had belted his way back into the title hunt with a 12-round decision over Michael Katsidis a week before Marquez ended Casamayor's reign. But the fact that Casamayor had stopped Katsidis in his last successful defense relegated Diaz' victory over the Australian bleeder to secondary status. Casamayor, on the other hand, entered the Marquez bout as the true lightweight champion, possessor of THE RING belt.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez test Casamayor's beard with a left jab. Hand speed and timing, combined with Marquez' outstanding boxing technique, were key to his success against a naturally larger man. Note how Marquez keeps his right hand high, guarding his chin.

Marquez, who previously held alphabet titles at featherweight and junior lightweight, had originally decided to invade the lightweight division in search of a third fight with Manny Pacquiao. The Filipino icon had vacated THE RING junior lightweight championship he'd won via controversial decision over Marquez in June, and captured the WBC

lightweight belt with a sensational knockout of David Diaz.

Unfortunately for Marquez, Pacquiao now has a much bigger fish to fry in Oscar De La Hoya. And regardless of what happens in that fight, it is unlikely Pacquiao will tangle with Marquez again in the foreseeable future.

"There's no way in the world that [Pacquiao's promoter Bob] Arum and Pac-Man want anything to do with Marquez," said Richard Schaefer, CEO of Golden Boy Promotions.

"The third fight will probably not happen, but I have already proved I

"Dinamita" Finish

Just when it looked like the lightweight title bout between champion Joel Casamayor and challenger Juan Manuel Marquez would end in one of those close, controversial decisions that plague boxing, Marquez unleashed a spectacular display of powerpuncing that took the judges out of the equation and crowned a new 135-pound king.

Good thing, too, because although Marquez seemed to be leading going into the 11th round, only judge Glen Feldman had the Mexican ahead (97-93) after 10 completed rounds. Feldman's cohorts, Patricia Morse Jarman and Paul Smith, both had it even at 95-95.

True, the cagey Casamayor did not relinquish THE RING belt without putting up a strong argument. Even so, his punches never had quite the same pop as Marquez', and by the time referee Tony Weeks rescued the Cuban at the 2:55 mark of the 11th, Casamayor's wizened face was badly busted up and he was taking foolish risks in an effort to hang on to the title.

There's no doubt that Casamayor's southpaw style and finely honed boxing skills made it difficult for Marquez, especially in the early rounds. But Marquez' quicker hands gradually allowed him to gain control of a strategic struggle that pitted two of the sport's most accomplished craftsmen.

Casamayor, 135, had success when he could control the distance and run Marquez into his left hand counters, but after he suffered a deep cut over his right eye in the fourth, Marquez, 135, swept the next three rounds on THE RING scorecard. "Dinamita" used the lead right to excellent effect, and also put together some snappy combinations.

The proud champion mounted a comeback of sorts in the eighth and ninth, as he again found his foe's face with left hands. But in his eagerness to turn things in his favor, Casamayor began to lunge in, which left him vulnerable to Marquez' counters. A hard counter right won the 10th for the challenger, and another the next round proved to be the beginning of the end for Casamayor.

The round was already into the final minute when Marquez landed the definitive blow. The punch caught Casamayor flush and sent him down—hard. He regained his feet inside of Weeks' count, and after a brief clinch, Casamayor planted his feet and went for broke.

They both cut loose with a sustained barrage, but it was Marquez who landed all the solid punches. A number of additional shots found the mark before a final right hand floored Casamayor again.

He fell awkwardly, landing on his right shoulder, his arms outstretched and twisted partway behind him. Weeks didn't bother to count, stopping the fight with just five seconds remaining in the round.

Marquez beats Casamayor to the punch

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

"I was the more intelligent fighter," said Marquez, after improving his record to 49-4-1 (35). "I knew to neutralize his left hand. I threw a lot of combinations because I knew I couldn't win with just one punch."

Casamayor, 36-4-1 (22), agreed with his conqueror's assessment: "He knew how to control my punches, and I had a bad night."

And so the title changed hands the way it is supposed to—in the ring, with the former champion beaten fair and square, no arithmetic required.

—N.C.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez made excellent use of his lead right in order to combat Casamayor's southpaw style. It was also the punch that put Casamayor down twice in the 11th round and made Marquez champion.

With his buzz saw style and friendly, clean-cut image, Diaz is very popular, and rightly so. His Armstrong-esque approach virtually guarantees fans get their money's worth, and even though Campbell gave him a thorough pasting, "The Baby Bull" was still charging, albeit on weary, wobbly legs, when the final bell sounded.

Marquez vs. Diaz in early-2009. What's not to like?

Still, other challengers were mentioned during the postfight press conference, including Casamayor.

"I fought as a champion, but Marquez was the best this night," said a dejected Casamayor, whose dark glasses failed to hide the strips of medical tape holding his right brow together. "I'm very emotional right now. I want a rematch."

Even though two of the three official judges had it even going into the 11th round, it would be a hard sell. Yes, the defending champion had kept it relatively close and many of the rounds were hard to score, but regardless of how you had it after 10, the finish was so emphatic, it's tough to envision the cagey old Cuban faring any better in a rematch.

can beat Manny Pacquiao," said Marquez, who understandably believes he should have been given the decision in his second fight with Pacquiao. "I did my job in the ring, now Manny and Oscar have to do their part."

Besides getting ready for his superfight with Pacquiao, De La Hoya's job, as president of Golden Boy Promotions, is to promote Marquez. But now that he's co-opted Pac-Man for his own purposes, he owes it to Marquez to find a suitably appealing consolation prize.

As far as most fans are concerned, a match between Marquez and Campbell would be the best solution, and as Campbell is THE RING's number-one lightweight contender, we wholeheartedly concur. That, however, might be almost as unlikely as a third Pacquiao-Marquez showdown. Campbell is a Don King fighter, and GBP has no compelling reason to risk the world lightweight crown against one of King's men—especially when they have Juan Diaz under contract.

Actually, Diaz is a highly acceptable substitute for Campbell as an attraction, and in some respects brings more to the table than "The Galaxxy Warrior." The Houston, Texas, doubleheader that featured Diaz' win over Katsidis *(see sidebar on page 78)* and Rocky Juarez' TKO of Jorge Barrios drew a crowd of 13,477, almost double the attendance of Marquez-Casamayor.

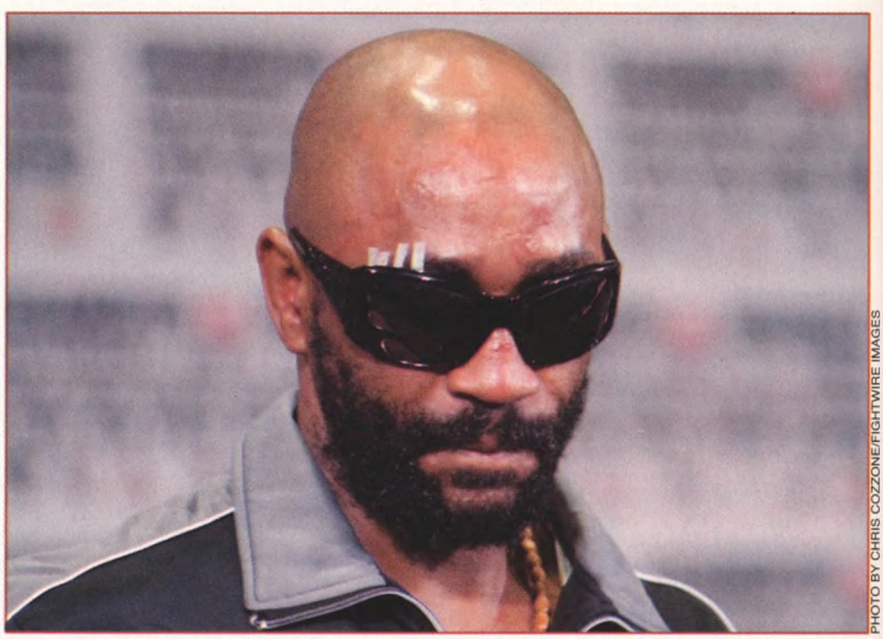


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

His first knockout loss was a bitter pill for the proud Casamayor to swallow. But the ex-champ responded with class and made no excuses. At age 37, however, the Cuban could very well be coming to the end of a stellar career.

By the time referee Tony Weeks stopped the fight, following the second knockdown, Casamayor looked even older than his purported age of 37. Blood leaked from his eyebrow and nose, and there was a hurt in his eyes that had been absent after his previous defeats. They flashed anger and defiance on those earlier occasions. This time it was the look of a man who, after suffering the indignity of being stopped for the first time in 41 professional

Who's Sorry Now?

A few days after his no-show in Biloxi, Mississippi, Joan Guzman issued a public apology to virtually everybody involved in putting on the scuttled fight, including would-be opponent Nate Campbell.

"No trainer is to blame. No nutritionist is to blame. No manager is to blame. No promoter is to blame. Put the blame on me, Joan Guzman, because I was completely at fault. My conduct in this important matter was unprofessional.

"I rolled the dice by coming in too heavy at the start of training camp. I was able to get away with this many times before, but at age 32, my body shut down on me with 3½ pounds to go. My metabolism rejected taking off so many pounds in a short period."

Campbell, who lost a reported $300,000 payday, also issued a statement, which in part read:

"When I got home to Jacksonville today and checked my e-mail, I had hundreds of e-mails from fans asking me to call out Marquez, after the nice job he did on Casamayor. I don't really have much faith in this whole 'calling out' business, because I tried that with Casamayor, and with Pacquiao, and it got me nowhere. But if Juan Manual is interested in fighting me, I'm all for it ... Some folks think I'm the best lightweight in the world, and some folks think that honor belongs to Marquez. Well, no matter which way you have it, me and him are number one and number two in the division, and a fight between us clears it up once and for all as to who is the baddest man at 135. I'm ready to roll right now."

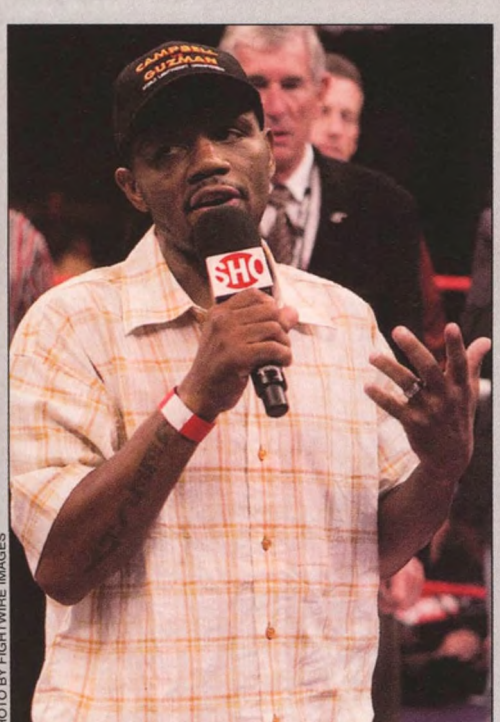


PHOTO BY FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Campbell addresses the crowd after Guzman's no-show

Guzman, on the other hand, has few options. For his most recent fight, a November 2007 decision over Humberto Soto, he weighed 129½. As it is clear he'll never fight as a junior lightweight again and he has yet to fight at 135, if indeed that's where he still intends to compete, THE RING has, for the time being, removed him from the ratings.

—N.C.

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fights, finally knew the true taste of defeat.

But, most of all, Casamayor looked old, old and tired, even after they'd patched him up to face the media. Asking for a rematch is what fighters do.

Casamayor's actual age has been the subject of debate, but there's no question that his journey has been long and arduous. He is the most accomplished of the Cuban expatriates who fled their homeland in pursuit of Yankee dollars, an Olympic gold medalist who went on to win the WBA super featherweight title and the world

"Baby Bull" Back On Track

Lightweight contenders Juan Diaz and Michael Katsidis were both coming off crushing defeats and were desperately in need of an impressive comeback victory the evening of September 6. But as they were fighting each other, only one could achieve his goal, and that turned out to be Diaz, who pleased a large turnout of hometown fans at Houston's Toyota Center by winning a 12-round split decision.

That Glen Hamada saw fit to score the fight for Katsidis by a 115-113 margin says far more about his ability to judge a professional boxing match than it does about the contest itself. Thankfully, judges Levi Martin and Gale Van Hoy were sufficiently alert to ensure that the right guy got the victory, handing in scores of 115-113 and 116-112, respectively, for Diaz. THE RING also saw Diaz the winner, 116-113.

Katsidis, 134½, Toowoomba, Australia, looked the sharper of the two in the first round, only to have Diaz' second-round barrage cancel out his own flurry toward the end of the round. Katsidis also suffered a cut over his left eye in the second, which certainly didn't help his cause.

The pace slowed in the third, but accelerated again in the fourth when they slugged it out to the delight of the live crowd and HBO's TV audience. Katsidis connected with some hard jabs, but they were not enough to stem the tide of punches coming from his rampaging rival.

Diaz, 134½, dominated the fifth and sixth, surging forward behind an assortment of blows, including his sometimes underused jab. Katsidis fired back with both hands, but couldn't match Diaz' connect rate and was repeatedly drilled with right hands. To make matters worse, a large hematoma appeared under his left eye, which would grow progressively worse as the bout continued.

Despite misleading advice from his corner, which kept telling him he was winning, Katsidis, 23-2 (20), staged a mini-rally in the seventh and eighth, but never really took control away from Diaz, who successfully fended off the Aussie's surge. The weary pair kept firing away in the final round, still looking for the knockout that would never come. Still, a vicious right uppercut from Diaz, 34-1 (17), sealed the deal in the closing moments and propelled him back into the title picture.

The referee was Laurence Cole.

—N.C.

Diaz cracks Katsidis en route to comeback victory

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The winner and new lightweight champion of the world ... Juan Manuel Marquez. After several disappointing losses in big fights, Marquez emerged triumphant in the most important fight of his career.

lightweight championship in pro career that began in 1996.

That's a helluva career by any standard, borderline Hall of Fame stuff. But "El Cepillo" will no doubt fight on, past his best to be sure, but a serious proposition still.

Conversely, Marquez, a remarkably fresh 35, seems to be fighting better than ever. He's been in with just as many world-class opponents as Casamayor over the course of 53 pro bouts, has overcome some setbacks, and retained his drive. Regardless of whether or not he ever gets another crack at Pacquiao, Marquez should be in line for some handsome paydays.

The new champion begins his reign as the lightweight division comes into sharper focus. Katsidis and, to a lesser degree, Casamayor are fading, while the inconsistent Campbell remains a dangerous wild card.

Regardless of who's next, Marquez is in an enviable position. Competition from Antonio Margarito for the hearts, minds, and wallets of Mexican and Mexican-American fans is expected. But let's not forget that Marquez, a pro since '94, has already outlasted Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, and on a broader stage held his own with a force of nature called Pacquiao. If he fought with the reckless abandon of "The Tijuana Tornado," he probably would not have endured so long and had the opportunity to bloom so late.

The combination of peerless craftsmanship, persistence, and a heart as big as any of the aforementioned greats has carried Marquez to this moment. What he does with it is up to him. ■

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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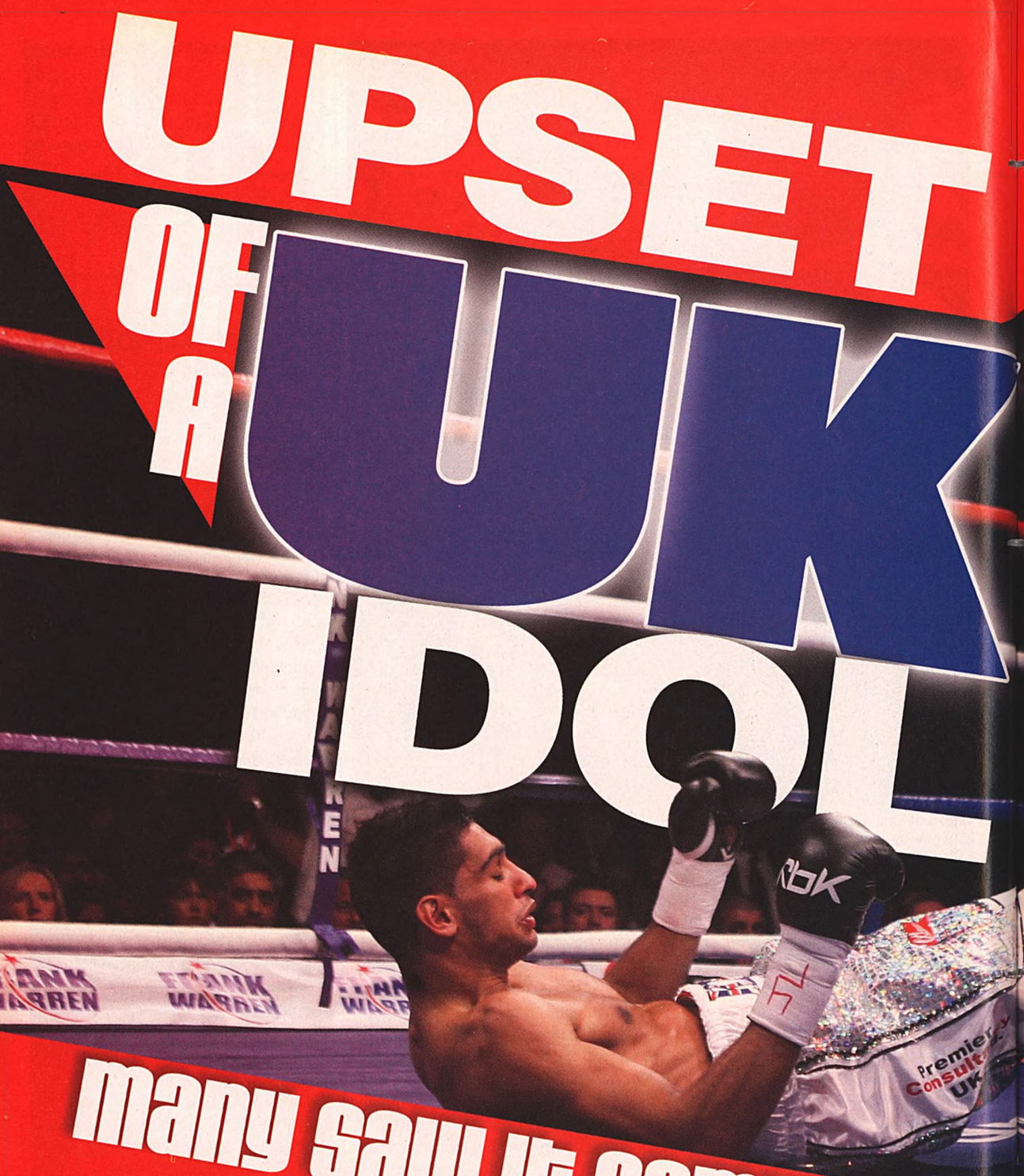
UPSET OF A UK IDOL

Many saw it coming (even if Khan didn't)



Blown away: Khan never made it out of the first round of his bout with Colombian slugger Prescott, who handed the British star his first professional defeat. Although considered an upset, there had been ominous signs in previous fights that Khan's chin and defense left a lot to be desired.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

By Brian Doogan

It was the morning after the night before. Amir Khan stood in his gym in Bolton, his hometown in the north of England, displaying no visible scars from the first defeat of his career, a first-round knockout by Colombian hitman Breidis Prescott.

"I want to show to my fans and friends that I'm all right," he said. "I was up against a tough fighter and, at my level, not many fighters would have taken that fight on." He declared that he had watched a video of his quick denouement and had identified the mistakes he made. "But I honestly think in

12 months' time I will be a world champion," he insisted. "It's all about picking the right fights, getting the right experience, the right coaching, and the right management, everything."

It was as if he had not learned a single thing.

Khan's destruction in 54 seconds at the MEN Arena in Manchester was dramatic and shocking in its brutal brevity, but it was no shock to anyone who has followed his career closely that the 2004 Olympic Games silver medalist at lightweight was knocked out by the first serious puncher he faced. This was no blip or a case of the 21-year-old prospect merely being caught cold. It was an accident waiting to happen, an inevitable consequence of the fundamental flaws at the heart of the young contender.

Lauded on both sides of the Atlantic as perhaps the most exciting prospect in boxing today, his strengths were obvious: good balance, fluid movement, and formidable hand speed. He also wielded considerable power through his first 18 bouts, which his record of 15 stoppages emphasized, and his appetite for the violence of his trade was encrusted with diamond-hard nerve. Make no mistake, beneath the boyish veneer lurked a vicious streak.

But his deficiencies were just as clear.

Even in a dominating performance against light-punching Martin Kristjansen from Denmark on April 5, 2008, at the Bolton Arena, he betrayed a worrying vulnerability to being hit by a right hand over the top of his low left, the same punch with which Scotland's Willie Limond, another ostensibly light hitter, induced a serious crisis by flooring him in the sixth round of their July 2007 bout.

"I always tell kids that anybody with two fists, who can turn their weight over, can punch," Barry McGuigan, the former WBA featherweight titleholder, cautioned with Khan in mind. "If the target is open, if the defense is poor, hands down, chin up, feet all wrong, then any decent boxer can knock you over." Manchester's Craig Watson had accomplished it in one of Khan's last bouts as an amateur.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A happy Prescott waves the Colombian flag after dispatching Khan in just 54 seconds of the opening round. Critics wonder why such a formidable puncher was matched with the soft-chinned fan favorite.

When Michael Gomez floored him with a left hook to the jaw in the second round of a bloody and ferocious encounter on June 21 at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham, a discernible pattern had emerged. It was the third time that Khan had hit the canvas, for Rachid Drilzane, a French journeyman who had lost three times, floored Khan in the seventh round at London's ExCel Arena in December 2006 (though Khan maintained that his feet got entangled in the ropes). Drilzane had stopped no one in 13 bouts prior to encountering Khan, Limond has accumulated only eight wins by stoppage in 31 contests, and Gomez was five years removed from his last meaningful performance, a fifth-round knockout of Scotland's Alex Arthur. Moreover, Gomez' most productive fighting days took place in the junior lightweight ranks.

Colin Hart, the longtime boxing columnist for *The Sun* newspaper in

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Note how low Khan is holding his left hand as he wings a right hand at Prescott. Many believe that Khan lacks the fundamental boxing skills to compete at the top level and that if he doesn't shore up his defenses, he'll never live up to expectations.

Britain, who was ringside in Birmingham, wrote that "the highly gifted Bolton boy has got to tighten his suspect defense ... There's no doubt Khan's chin is more bone china than granite and he must learn to move his head more and not go forward in straight lines."

Khan's promoter, Frank Warren, sounded a note of caution too. "Amir is impetuous and he gets caught sometimes when he drops his hands to go for the finish," Warren acknowledged. "I could set up a world title fight for him tomorrow, but he's had 18 fights, he needs more experience, more schooling, and that's the reality. We're not going to rush him."

Blindly and destructively, Khan was fed to Prescott instead. Incredibly, Jorge Rubio, the Cuban who took over Khan's training ahead of this fight, recommended the 25-year-old Colombian with an unbeaten record of 19-0 (17) to be the opponent. Tall and long-limbed, he looked reminiscent of the welterweight Tommy Hearns, even if he had not greatly impressed in a 10-rounder against Miami-based Cuban Richard Abril on June 27, a bout that was broadcast on ESPN2, with Prescott prevailing only by split decision. But his underlying hardness, honed in the sweltering port of Barranquilla on Colombia's Caribbean coast, should have underlined the danger for Khan.

Prescott lives for boxing, literally, sleeping above the gym in which he and junior welterweight contender Ricardo Torres train. His family struggles to survive in the slums to the south of the city where guerrillas and paramilitary gangs controlled by some of the country's biggest drug traffickers fought out a ruthless turf war while Prescott was growing up.

"Life there is a daily fight," Prescott explained to the (London) *Daily Telegraph*. "But, thank God, we grew up into decent people. Lots of schoolmates chose the wrong path. Three friends of mine were killed by the paramilitaries. Another joined the guerrillas, then deserted and now they are looking for him."

Quite what Rubio was thinking when he looked at Prescott and picked him out as an opponent for Khan is difficult to fathom. Rubio's CV included working with the Cuban national boxing team prior to his defection to Miami in 1996 and assisting in the training of former world middleweight champion Jermain Taylor for his first 11 bouts. He also trained Zahir Raheem, who dropped a decision in a challenge for the WBO lightweight title in 2006, and former WBA cruiserweight titleholder Robert Daniels, whose best days were more than 15 years ago. His appointment as Khan's trainer in July took many people by surprise.

"I may not be known by a lot of people, but I am very confident about my ability," Rubio said. "I have my own gym in Miami and I worked there with David Haye's team, helping him to prepare for five fights before he won the world cruiserweight title. I want to do the same with Amir Khan and I am convinced that he will also be world champion."

But why did a promoter as experienced in the business as Warren not intervene? Should Rubio, working with Khan for the first time, have had the authority to select the opponent?

"You would think you would know what you are talking about when you

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Warning signal: Khan has been knocked down a number of times by relatively modest punchers, including Willie Limond, in July 2007. Khan climbed off the canvas to rally back and stop Limond in the eighth round, but wasn't so fortunate against Prescott.

select an opponent in those circumstances," reflected a bemused but not blameless Warren. "But whoever Amir fights, the buck stops with me. When he's winning, I'm a great matchmaker and a great promoter, and when he loses I have to take the responsibility."

Having lost world light heavyweight and super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe and world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton in quick succession, Khan's defeat must have caused Warren particularly acute pain. Khan's 19th bout represented a new departure from a business perspective, for it was his first to be broadcast on Sky Box Office pay-per-view. For headline attractions, Warren will have to choose in the immediate future from the likes of Nicky Cook, the Dagenham-based super featherweight who beat Scotland's Alex Arthur on points for the WBO title on the Manchester show, Welsh cruiserweight Enzo Maccarinelli, who was stopped in the second round by Haye earlier this year, Kevin Mitchell, the Dagenham-based super featherweight, and Audley Harrison, the 2000 Olympic Games gold medal winner at super heavyweight whose career plunged to new depths of mediocrity in Manchester as he labored to victory on points over Brazil's George Arias, a former cruiserweight title challenger.

PHOTO BY JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

Khan's promoter, Frank Warren, also took a gigantic hit, especially as he had already lost the services of Ricky Hatton and Joe Calzaghe prior to Khan's downfall.

It is not only Khan who will have to pick himself up following this disaster. But Warren is a proven survivor and Khan is not. He is a flawed diamond ruthlessly exposed by the violently quick and powerful hands of Prescott. The 25-year-old had boxed only twice before outside of his native Colombia, but he was confident from the moment he stepped off the plane that brought him into Manchester that he would acquaint Khan with the harsh realities of the prize ring.

From the moment Prescott landed a jolting left jab on Khan's jaw in the opening seconds that caused the British boxer's legs to take an involuntary skip, the signs were ominous. Khan had charged across the ring at the sound of the bell, but his helter-skelter attack was easily repelled by Prescott, 134½. When the Colombian landed a hard left hook high on the temple, he set in motion the dramatic chain of events that culminated in Khan's demise. A heavy overhand right, followed and another left hook to the jaw sent Khan, 134½, crashing to the canvas. Only 25 seconds had elapsed.

Even so, it would have been perfectly reasonable for British referee Terry O'Connor to have stopped proceedings there and then. Khan was up at the count of three, but his legs were completely gone and he staggered against the ropes as O'Connor completed the mandatory eight-count.

In similar circumstances, former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis was not allowed to continue by referee Jose Guadalupe Garcia after he had been felled by a stunning right hand to the chin from Oliver McCall in 1994, saving him from the beating that might have been, and Lewis went on to have a stellar career. But O'Connor had been heavily criticized for his handling of Joe Calzaghe's world super

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

American trainer Freddie Roach, who briefly worked with Khan when the Englishman was in the United States and is now his new trainer, believes that it's not too late for the 21-year-old to overcome his defensive limitations.

middleweight title defense against Peter Manfredo in April 2007, when he was widely considered to have stopped the bout prematurely in the third round. If he had stopped the bout during his instructions to the two boxers before the first bell had been rung, it would not have been a bit premature—such were Manfredo's qualifications compared to Calzaghe's—but the reaction in some quarters may have contributed to O'Connor's decision to allow a badly dazed Khan to continue. No doubt, he was also trying to afford the home fighter every opportunity.

For Khan, however, the situation was hopeless. Prescott moved in and caught him with another left before he finished the fight with a hard right and wicked left to the chin that left Khan in a heap, his world title dreams in tatters and his distressed mother, sitting at ringside, in tears. O'Connor's completion of the 10-count, despite Khan's futile efforts to get back to his feet, was a formality.

So where does Khan go from here? Straight to Freddie Roach, who was hired as Amir's new trainer the day before this issue went to press. Roach is adamant that it is still not too late for Khan to grasp some fundamentals, which proved beyond the teaching abilities of Oliver Harrison, his trainer from whom he split before meeting Gomez, and Rubio, who was fired shortly after the Prescott debacle.

"Manny Pacquaio is the perfect case in point because he is a fighter who was knocked out twice early in his career and he has risen to the pinnacle because he concentrated hard on improving his defense," Roach said before he had seen the knockout by Prescott. "Amir came to my gym in Los Angeles and we worked together, but it was just one day. He seems like a very athletic guy with a very good work ethic.

"When I was a fighter, I learned the art of defense from my trainer, Eddie Futch, but once I got hit in a fight I just wanted to tear the other guy's head off. I was too headstrong. Khan is more of a natural boxer and he will pick up on head movement, feinting, and setting things up better. He will have to, if he's going to make it to the top of his weight class."

For Khan, 18-1 (15), it will be a long way back from the seat of his pants, dispatched on the floor by a previously unknown Colombian. Which is why any talk of him winning a world title within 12 months is misplaced. He ought to be saving his breath for the work that he needs to do on the fundamentals of his profession.

"This fight only proved what many of us had thought: Khan has a dodgy defense and no punch resistance. He was wobbled by the first stiff jab which Breidis threw," concluded Colin Hart. "He doesn't even have to be hit by a hammer blow, and we feared this ever since he fought Limond, who is not a puncher yet Khan was all over the place when he got nailed in their fight. After the Gomez fight, I wrote that it was no longer a question of 'when' Khan will win a world title but 'if.' Now the question has to be, 'Will he ever be the same again?' This could be the end of a career. That's the fear." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Photographers zero in on the dejected Khan moments after his maiden professional defeat. It was over so quickly, he did not take the sort of prolonged punishment that can ruin a fighter. Even so, it remains to be seen if he can bounce back.

THE COLOR OF BOXING

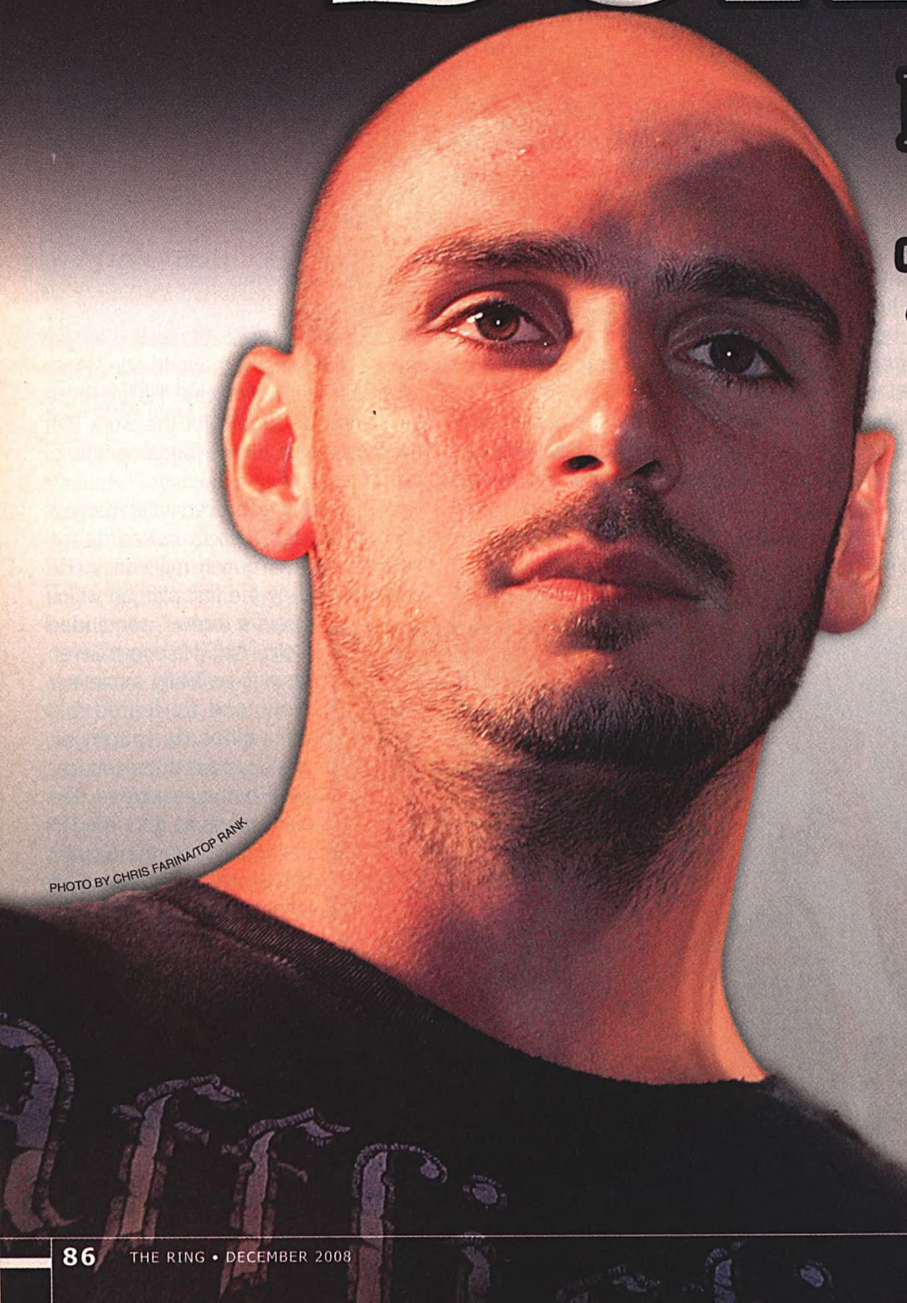


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

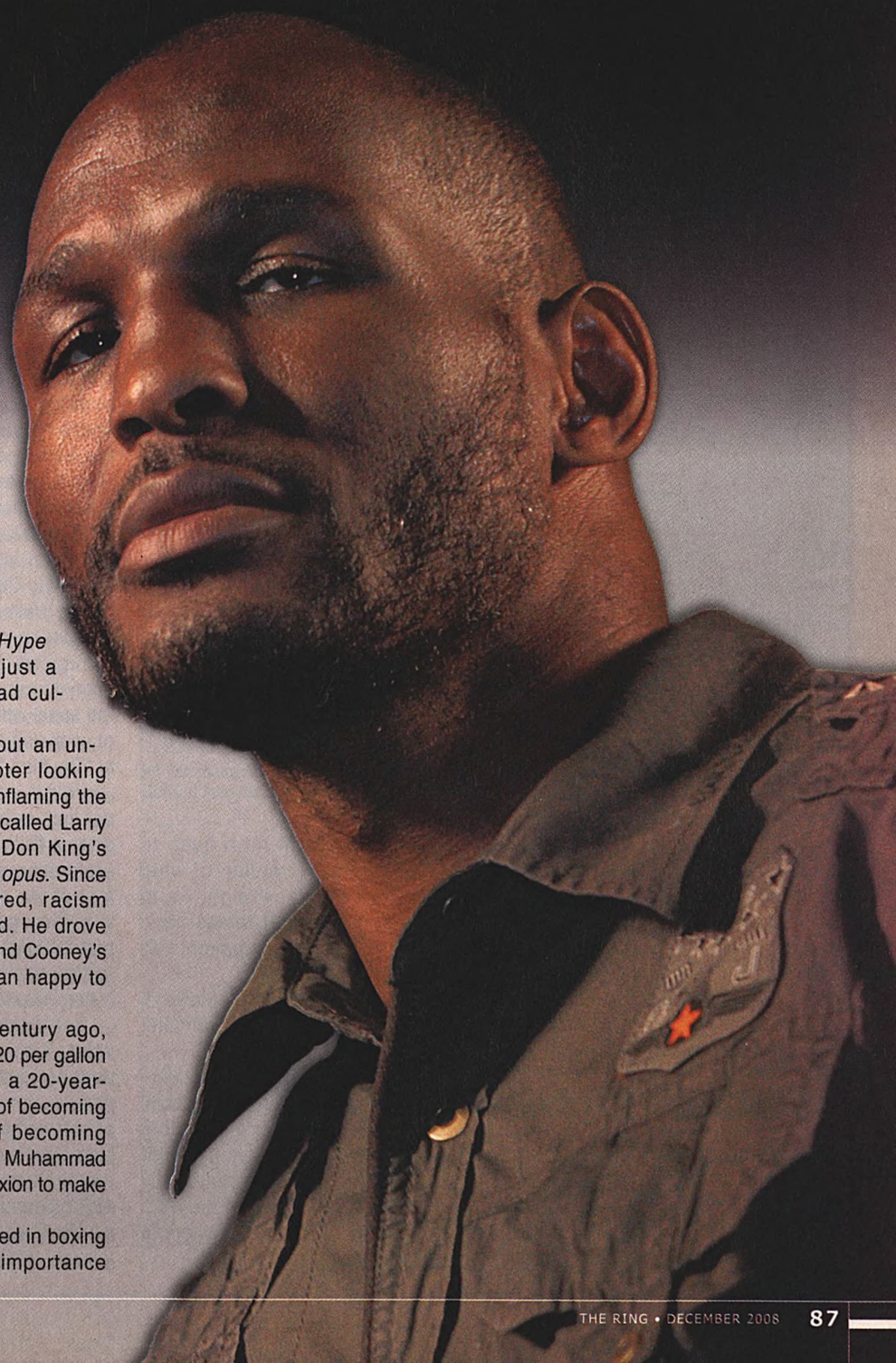
Black & White, Then & Now

Sultan (promoter): "I'm proud to announce that ... James 'The Grim Reaper' Roper will defend his heavyweight title against Irish Terry Conklin."

Conklin: "But I'm not Irish."

Sol (trainer): "This is boxing; it just means you're white."

—*The Great White Hype*, 1996



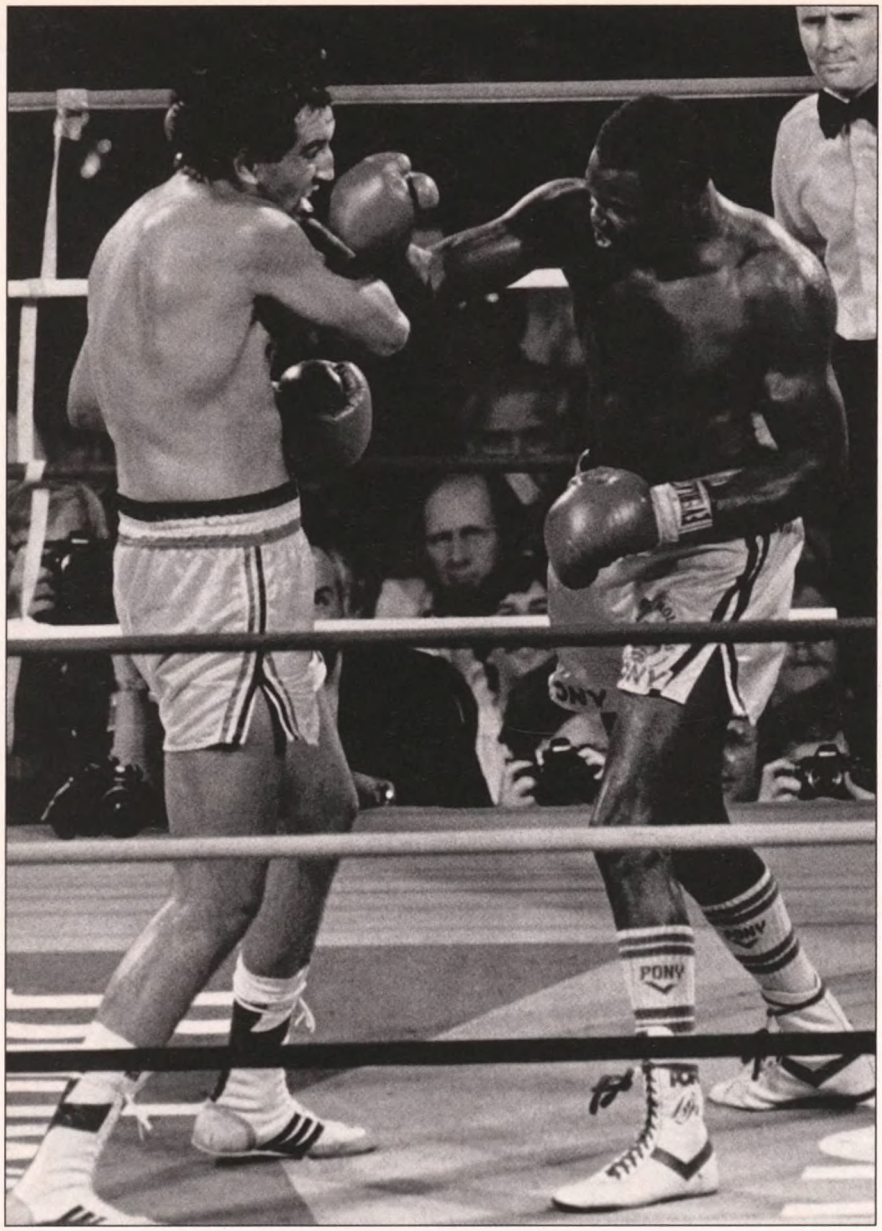
By Michael Rivest

The Great White Hype may have been just a comedy, but it had cultural resonance.

The 1990s spoof about an unscrupulous black promoter looking to increase the gate by inflaming the racial attitudes of fans recalled Larry Holmes-Gerry Cooney, Don King's 1982 marketing *magnum opus*. Since race sells, King pondered, racism will sell better—and it did. He drove profits through the roof, and Cooney's managers were more than happy to let him drive.

That was a quarter-century ago, when gas prices were $1.20 per gallon and Barack Obama was a 20-year-old kid with little chance of becoming a senator, and none of becoming President. He lacked what Muhammad Ali once called "the complexion to make the connection."

But something happened in boxing last December, and its importance



The promotion for the Holmes-Cooney match in 1982 took tasteless advantage of racism to sell the fight, which turned out to be a financial blockbuster. While that sort of hype might not work in 2008, there will always be a way for promoters to appeal to fans' basest emotions.

may be measured, paradoxically, by how soon it was forgotten. In a display of racially based prefight hype, light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins told challenger Joe Calzaghe that he "wouldn't lose to any white boy." The remark fell flat. What he got for his trouble, instead of a racial counterattack and more ticket sales, was harsh treatment in the press and some lost fans. But mostly, nobody cared.

"You should have seen the reaction from the reporters," said Emanuel Steward, who was standing 10 feet away from Hopkins when he made the remark. "They were laughing at him. He made a fool of himself."

Could the incident have been to boxing a miniature version of what the Obama candidacy might be to our nation, a sign that things have changed? Is our preoccupation with race over?

"It's a different world," said Steward. "The Holmes-Cooney hype wouldn't work [today]."

Others are not yet ready to indulge in a backslapping-celebration of racial harmony, especially over a sport that has so often been synonymous with racial controversy. As recently as July '08, Floyd Mayweather called the HBO network and its boxing broadcasters "a bunch of racists."

"They talk about Kelly Pavlik, a white fighter, like he's the second coming. Or they go crazy over Manny Pacquiao. Is it racial?" Mayweather said. "Absolutely. They praise white fighters. They praise Hispanic fighters, whatever. But black fighters they never praise."

As Obama learned early in his campaign, the road to the Democratic nomination would not be without racial speed bumps. The name "Farrakhan" dropped during a debate and occasional oblique references to Obama's "unelectability" were code words calling attention to his race and why we shouldn't support him because of it.

So is the change real and meaningful, or is it just, well, skin deep?

It's only natural that we look to boxing to help answer that big question since it represents, more than any other sport, a virtual barometer of society's racial attitudes. If all sports are metaphors, ritualized opportunities to act out life's challenges and issues, then boxing, the purest of sports, is practically a Rorschach test. We see in it what want to see or, more accurately, need to see.

The idea, oversimplification notwithstanding, is that to a white bigot, a promising Caucasian heavyweight is a "Great White Hope," the personification of a desire to reassert dominance over the upstart black man. Conversely, an angry African-American fan would see in the same white fighter the embodiment of every indignity suffered at the hands of "The Man."

Boxing participants, of course, do not kick or hit a ball, nor do they run down a field. They fight and they bleed, preferably until one falls down at the feet of the other. So it's easy to see why boxing invites—no, demands—metaphorical treatment, and why its history has been intertwined with the history of racism in America.

But if the inkblot test analogy is valid, if boxing does appeal to our deepest motives and desires, then it should also reveal the better angels of our nature, and not just the evil side. And it does. Many whites found themselves cheering for Holmes in 1982 because they resented being manipulated by the ugly prefight hype to root for "the white guy."

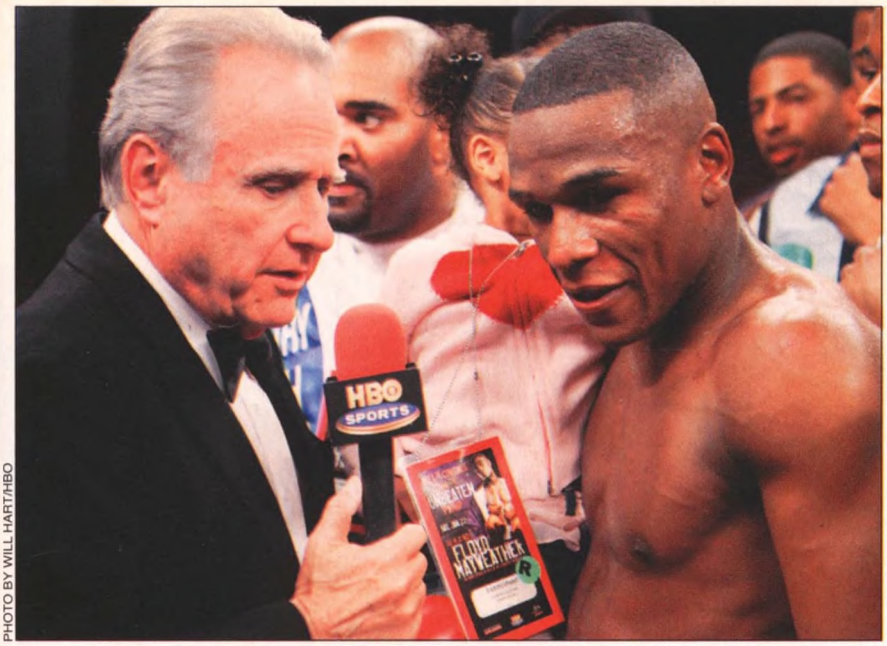


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Larry Merchant interviews Floyd Mayweather following his kayo of Henry Bruseles. Recently, Mayweather accused HBO's broadcast team of being racist.

on race. We forget that Jack Johnson was champion in *1908*, decades before Jackie Robinson crossed baseball's color line." Yes, he suffered great injustice, but, said Sugar, "Gimme a break, we were barely out of the 19th century. And don't forget, Johnson wasn't even the first successful black man in boxing. How about Joe Gans?"

Gans, who came to prominence more than a decade before Johnson, is recognized by many to be the greatest lightweight of all-time.

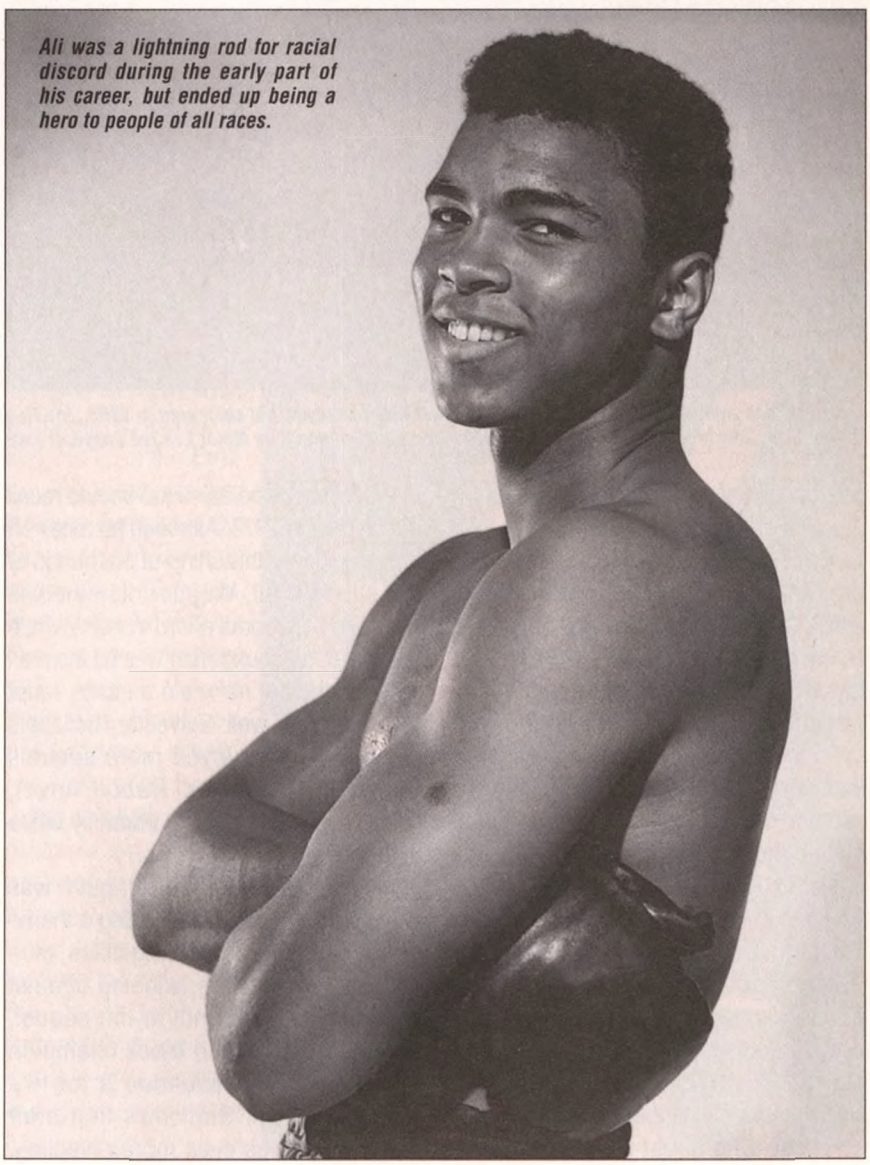
It's worth noting that it wasn't until 1954 that Elston Howard became the first black New York Yankee, and 1959 (a half-century after Jack Johnson) when Pumpsie Green did the same for the Boston Red Sox. By that time, the names of African-American boxers and champions could have practically filled

And how else can we explain the adulation Muhammad Ali enjoyed among young whites of that era? For all they knew in 1964, the Nation of Islam was a Middle Eastern country. And since Cassius Clay was unquestionably noble and good, they reasoned, he should be able to change his name and move there if he wanted. Only later did they read the *Autobiography Of Malcolm X* and learn what comes of subjugating a people for a few hundred years, and of the motivation behind Ali's principled and brave decision. But it took a boxer, a fighter they loved, to deliver the history lesson.

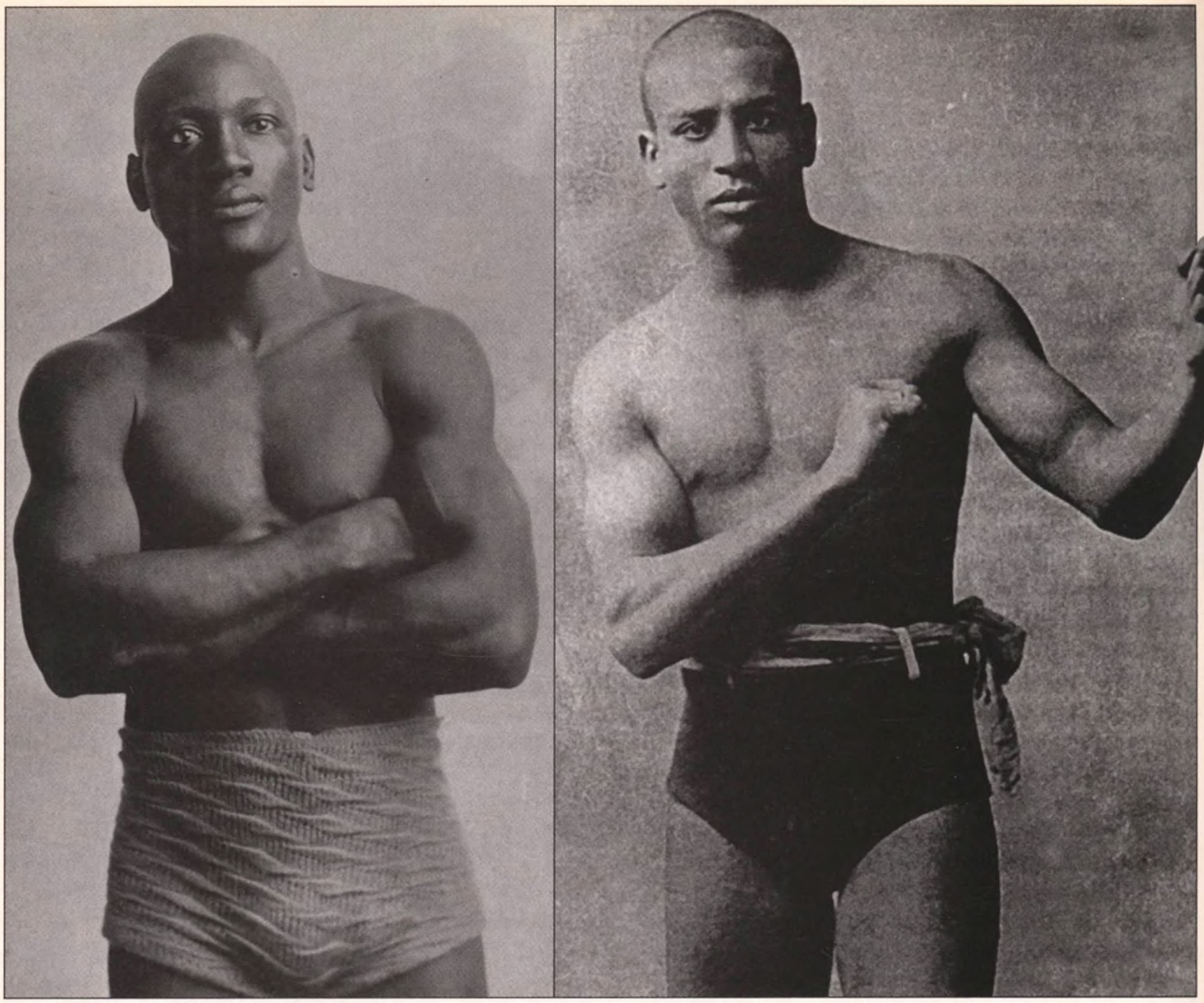
Put simply, many white people saw a great leader in the Rorschach test that was Muhammad Ali, and they liked where he was taking them. Many African-Americans felt the same way. As Gerald Early, author of *The Culture Of Bruising: Essays On Prizefighting, Literature, And Modern American Culture*, said of Jackie Robinson: "For each group, it was important that he was a hero for the other."

Some are quick to defend today's boxing from any accusation of racism, period. Besides Steward, Angelo Dundee argues that, "It's not about black and white; it's about talent or no talent."

"Look," added boxing historian Bert Sugar, "boxing was far, far ahead of other sports and the rest of the country



Ali was a lightning rod for racial discord during the early part of his career, but ended up being a hero to people of all races.



Although Jack Johnson (above left) became the first black heavyweight champion in 1908, Joe Gans (above right) won the lightweight title in 1902. By comparison, Jackie Robinson didn't become the first black man to play Major League Baseball until 1947.

a telephone directory. "So," said Sugar, "go pick on baseball."

Still, as Andrew Lindsay found in his exhaustively researched *Boxing In Black And White: A Statistical Survey Of Race In The Ring, 1949-1982*, racism has influenced boxing more than many would like to think. Limiting his study to the heavyweight division, Lindsay found that while boxing was colorblind when it came to breaking into THE RING's top 10, getting the coveted title shot was much easier for whites during the time period.

Fans will remember names like Scott LeDoux, Scott Frank, Ron Stander, Randy "Tex" Cobb, Terry Daniels, and Chuck Wepner as fighters who many say were "handled," that is, protected and groomed for big cash fights, while more worthy black challengers waited unjustly.

Those who doubt the power of the Great White Hope mystique should recall Ali-Wepner in 1975. Although he received the anticipated thrashing at the hands of the superior Ali, Wepner nonetheless sounded a powerful chord in many white viewers. One young man was so inspired by the fight that he wrote a movie script that did rather well. Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky,* which enjoyed more sequels than John Updike's *Rabbit* novel, touched something in its primarily white audience.

Rocky was hardly racist, but it was arguably racialistic in advancing a theme of traditional white working-class, blue collar steadfastness, winning against impossible odds, and, in the sequel, beating a very good black champion who fought and sounded a lot like Muhammad Ali. Stallone's first draft of the script was even more revealing. Mickey, the trainer, was originally written as an outright racist. We have to ask whether the *Rocky* movies would have enjoyed the same success had Rocky had instead been "Jamaal."

"Of course race is still a factor in boxing today," says Billy Costello, former WBC junior lightweight titleholder. "Not so much in an angry, racist way, like it was for Jack Johnson and Joe Louis, but you have to understand, promoters want to make money, and they know they can do it better if they stick a white fighter in there."

Gavin Cook agrees, recalling his years training alongside 1978 WBA light heavyweight titleholder Mike Rossman. Cook, who is African-American and now an attorney, states matter-of-factly, "Mike was a great guy, but we all knew, and he probably did too, that he was

Actor Carl Weathers, in the role of Apollo Creed, takes a playful poke at Sylvester Stallone in a scene from the 1976 movie* Rocky*. Would the Oscar-winning film and its many sequels have been so popular if Rocky Balboa had been black or Latino?

more marketable because he was white and Jewish. It was less common, so promoters could market it, make money off of it.

"Boxing is about money, which is not as noble as the fighters themselves might be," Cook said. "Since white fighters appeal to a huge segment of the marketplace, they'll make folks more money."

Arguing against the naïve notion that promoters are to blame for the history of race-based injustice in boxing, Early adds: "Promoters don't create society's fantasies and phobias, they merely exploit them. We can only ask from boxing what our culture is able to deliver."

But are these phobias still in play in 2008, in a world that just may vote a black man into the White House? Clearly, things have changed dramatically since *Rocky* (1975) and Holmes-Cooney (1982), where Lindsay ended his period of study. Although Rocky continued to war against some black opponents, right up until 2006 anyway, there was a subtle shift after *Rocky I and II* from the original black-white undercurrent to a more stereotypic good guy-bad guy paradigm.

While no detailed statistical analysis of black-white heavyweight competition exists for the period from 1982 to the present, it is safe to assume that if one did, it would likely yield a profoundly different result, but not necessarily because of more just practices.

Beyond the extent to which racial attitudes may have changed, the very nature of boxing has shifted from a sport dominated by champions from the United States to a global one, blurring the possible influence of American racism.

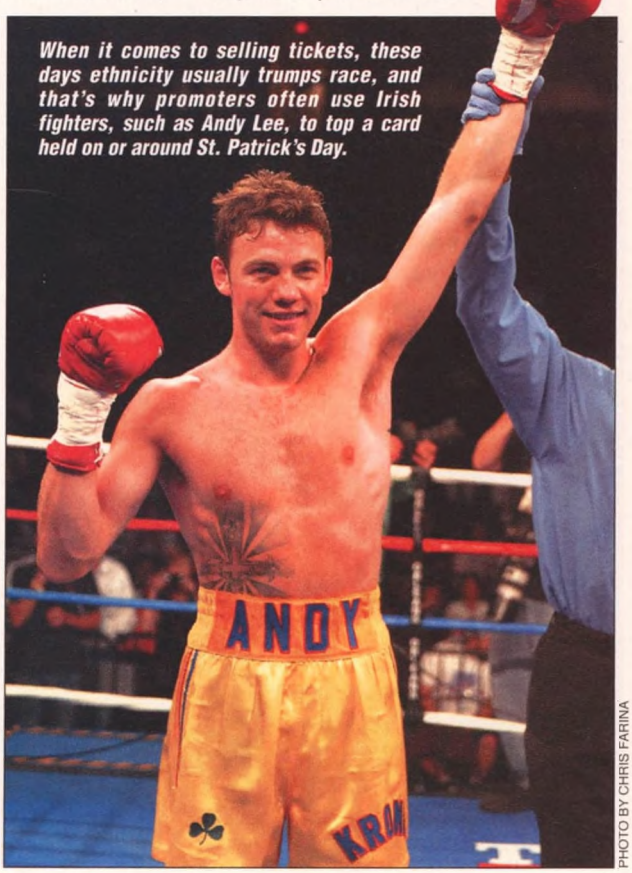
In THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings *(see page 15),* there is only one African-American, and of the two who are white, only Kelly Pavlik is American.

Ukrainian heavyweight titleholder Wladimir Klitschko is only the tip of the Eastern European iceberg that has dominated the heavyweight division in the past 10 years. Names like Ali, Frazier, Quarry, and Lyle have given way to Valuev, Povetkin, Maskaev, and Ibragimov. Whether prominence is due to the strength of their amateur program or perhaps a culturally based hunger for individual achievement that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bottom line remains the same: A white, Eastern European-dominated heavyweight division without a serious American threat, black or white.

So without waiting for American eyes to become colorblind, boxing itself changed. Black vs. white contests do not resonate as loudly in a world of "us vs. them." Nationality and ethnicity seem to have emerged as the comparatively innocuous replacements to race as fan motivators. This may help explain, at least partly, why Hopkins' remark to Calzaghe made such a thud. In the new global game, the old American race card is a joker.

Relating to fighters on the basis of their ethnicity is nothing new to boxing. To his fans, John L. Sullivan wasn't just a white man; he was Irish. Rocky Marciano was not just a white fighter; he was Italian, as was Rocky Graziano. And when Max Baer lost his heavyweight championship to Joe Louis, it wasn't the American flag sewn on his shorts, but the Star of David, even though Baer wasn't really Jewish. Even Muhammad Ali, Early notes, "was not just a black fighter, but a militant black Muslim fighter."

Shelly Finkel, manager and adviser to countless world champions and title-



When it comes to selling tickets, these days ethnicity usually trumps race, and that's why promoters often use Irish fighters, such as Andy Lee, to top a card held on or around St. Patrick's Day.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

holders from Mike Tyson to Vinnie Paz, has seen a dramatic softening in fan racial attitudes since Holmes-Cooney, and a renewed interest in ethnicity.

"While racial undertones are everywhere you look, not just in boxing, the focus in boxing has changed dramatically," said Finkel. "It's more about ethnicity now."

Lisa Elovich, head of Pugnacious Promotions in upstate New York, agrees. Acknowledging her awareness of and sensitivity to the desires of the target audience, Elovich notes that race is really irrelevant from a business point-of-view, but ethnicity is a different story.

"That's why I booked Andy Lee to fight on this past St. Patrick's Day," she said. Considered a rising star middleweight, the "Irish" Andy Lee-Brian Vera fight immediately sold 3,000 tickets at Connecticut's Mohegan Sun Casino.

"That wouldn't have happened otherwise," said Elovich.

Hall of Fame matchmaker J Russell Peltz also sees ethnicity as the driving force of fans, and hence, promoter interest today: "Latin fans, for instance, are more enthusiastic and for now seem like the bigger fight fans, so as a business man, I look out for good Latin fighters."

African-American fans have not been really engaged by a fighter since Mike Tyson, whose knockout power, Peltz is quick to note, excited white fans equally. "Everybody loves a knockout artist," he said. "It's about style, when you come right down to it."

Here is where we might challenge Mayweather's allegation that HBO announcers speak more glowingly about Pavlik and Pacquiao, or Hispanic fighters, than they do blacks on the basis of race.

Winky Wright, seeking to support Mayweather's complaint, raised an issue that could just as easily argue against it. "Black fighters, we have different styles," said Wright. "But the announcers, they want someone that just walks out there face first. Boxing is supposed to be an art. Black fighters, we've got style, we've got pizzazz. All they want is for us to just go out there and slug."

The issue of style is an important one. Wright is hardly the first to note the difference culture can bring to an athlete's style of play. In speaking of Jackie Robinson, Early reminds us that his success was at least partially due to the fact that "he introduced a different way of playing the game, with more emphasis on speed and aggressive baserunning."

Basketball, Early continues, is now a "black" game "not only because the overwhelming majority of the players are African-American, but because they have developed a style of play that is very different from the style when whites dominated the pro game back in the '50s."

The style African-Americans introduced to those sports was not only

Defensive-minded stylists Mayweather and Winky Wright have complained that the media is critical of black fighters while praising their white and Latino counterparts. But the praise may very well have more to do with the entertainment factor than race. Fans crave the type of action provided by Antonio Margarito and Mauel Cotto.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

different, it was more exciting. Fans were thrilled by Robinson's risks on the base paths. And anyone who remembers 1950s basketball, the plodding tempo that culminated in a Bill Sharman set shot, can appreciate a fan's adrenaline rush at a fast break that culminates in a slam-dunk. African-Americans didn't only enter basketball, they changed the game, and fans have turned out because of it.

But boxing is not baseball or basketball. What excites fans, what puts them on the edges of their seats, is not Wright's savvy defense and subtle counterpunching, or Mayweather's god-like reflexes and hit-and-don't-get-hit methodology. Only true students of the sport appreciate the genius of Wright and Mayweather's styles. Ordinary boxing fans will always choose a slugger who comes forward, torpedoes be damned. Tyson gave them that, and so white and black fans showed up, tickets in hand, as they did for George Foreman, Joe Frazier, Gerry Cooney, and Rocky for that matter.

Kelly Pavlik and Manny Pacquiao are those kind of fighters.

So even if Mayweather's point is on target and HBO announcers do speak more glowingly of certain fighters, the question is: Are they acting on racist motivations, or simply reflecting, even sharing, fan enthusiasm for sluggers who come with one intent: to go home early?

Might we ask the same question of Costello's and Cook's stand that white fighters generate more revenue: Is it because of race alone, or does Wright's observation apply here as well. Does the more straight in, slugging style, albeit often "white," appeal to fans?

But our attention thus far has been at the top of the game, that small tip of the pyramid where purses are big and the stakes are high. What has happened away from the TV lights, where the world of boxing is no bigger than the neighborhood gym?

"This is where you see racism," said Teddy Atlas, ESPN2's ringside analyst. "Not in the gyms, but in the lack of support and funding they receive."

Boxing has always drawn the poor and the marginalized, who, in the United States, have been disproportionately African-American. This is why, until the recent phenomenon of "white collar" boxing, most gyms were located in poor neighborhoods where fighting was, both literally and figuratively, part sport, part survival. "That's why they're often in basements," said Cooney. "That's where the people are and they're fighting their way up."

There, argues Atlas, little has changed. "Money still pours into basketball leagues, football programs, soccer programs, you name it," he said. "But so many of these kids, they can't even afford the membership dues, let alone the money for equipment, or the way to get to the parks and clubs. Boxing gyms teach not only discipline and responsible behavior, but they provide caring adults who get to know the kids as people.

"Since I started the Dr. Theodore A. Atlas Foundation (a charity named after his father), I've seen so clearly that racism is at the bottom of this. You'd better believe it'd be different if the kids were white."

Atlas tells of a new Miami-based youth boxing program his foundation helped start. He had invited the 20 or so young members, all African-American, to participate in his *Friday Night Fights* "Fight Plan," a demonstration of the strategies Atlas suggests the night's fighters should employ.

To relax one of the youth selected as a demonstrator before the cameras rolled, Atlas asked him when was his birthday. The resulting silence made him ask again, and then again. "I kept asking until I realized the kid had no idea," Atlas said. "Not only didn't the kid have a decent pair of sneakers before the boxing program, he never had a caring adult close enough to tell him when he was born.

"My point is that there's another world out there on the streets of this country, and it isn't white. We talk and talk about racism in boxing, but if you want to see it, don't look at HBO or ESPN. Go to the nearest urban area and see if they support the local boxing gym and the caring adults who run it, or who's trying to shut it down because of 'tight budgets.'"

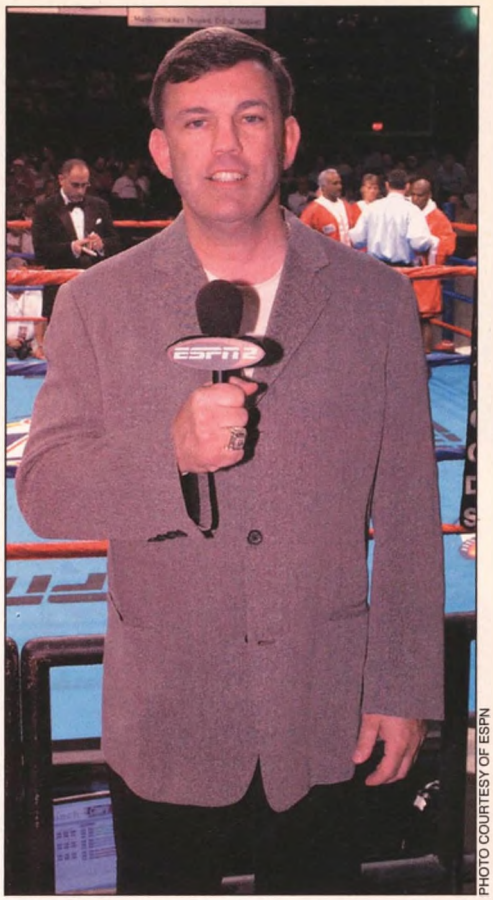


PHOTO COURTESY OF ESPN

ESPN's Teddy Atlas says racism is most keenly felt in the lack of funding and support for inner-city gyms. "You'd better believe it'd be different if the kids were white," said Atlas.

Race is complicated, but racism can be nearly inscrutable. Discerning its presence in the ring can be as difficult as it is outside of it. But we need to proceed in the knowledge that racism is not only part of our history, it is part of our cultural DNA as Americans. Marshall McLuhan, media critic and writer, once said about studying such things, "I don't know who it was that first discovered water, but I can be sure it wasn't a fish."

Still, we must talk about it, openly and fearlessly. We are doing it a lot more these days. The Obama candidacy has already opened doors that have made racism a dominant theme everywhere, not only in TV talk shows and at the office water cooler, but also in our kitchens and in our own minds as we daydream at the traffic light. Once again, our world is changing.

It is only fitting that boxing mirror the times. It always does. ■

Michael Rivest is a USA Boxing referee, judge, and freelance writer.

CLOTTEY CALLS OUT MARGARITO

Would Two Good Hands Make The Difference In A Rematch?

By David Mayo

Joshua Clottey's journey from Ghana to the cusp of welterweight supremacy tested him every step, from the roofless gymnasium in the hardscrabble land where he honed the ruggedness typical of his nation's proudest fighters, to surviving the near-injustice of a knockout punch scorned in his biggest career victory, over Zab Judah.

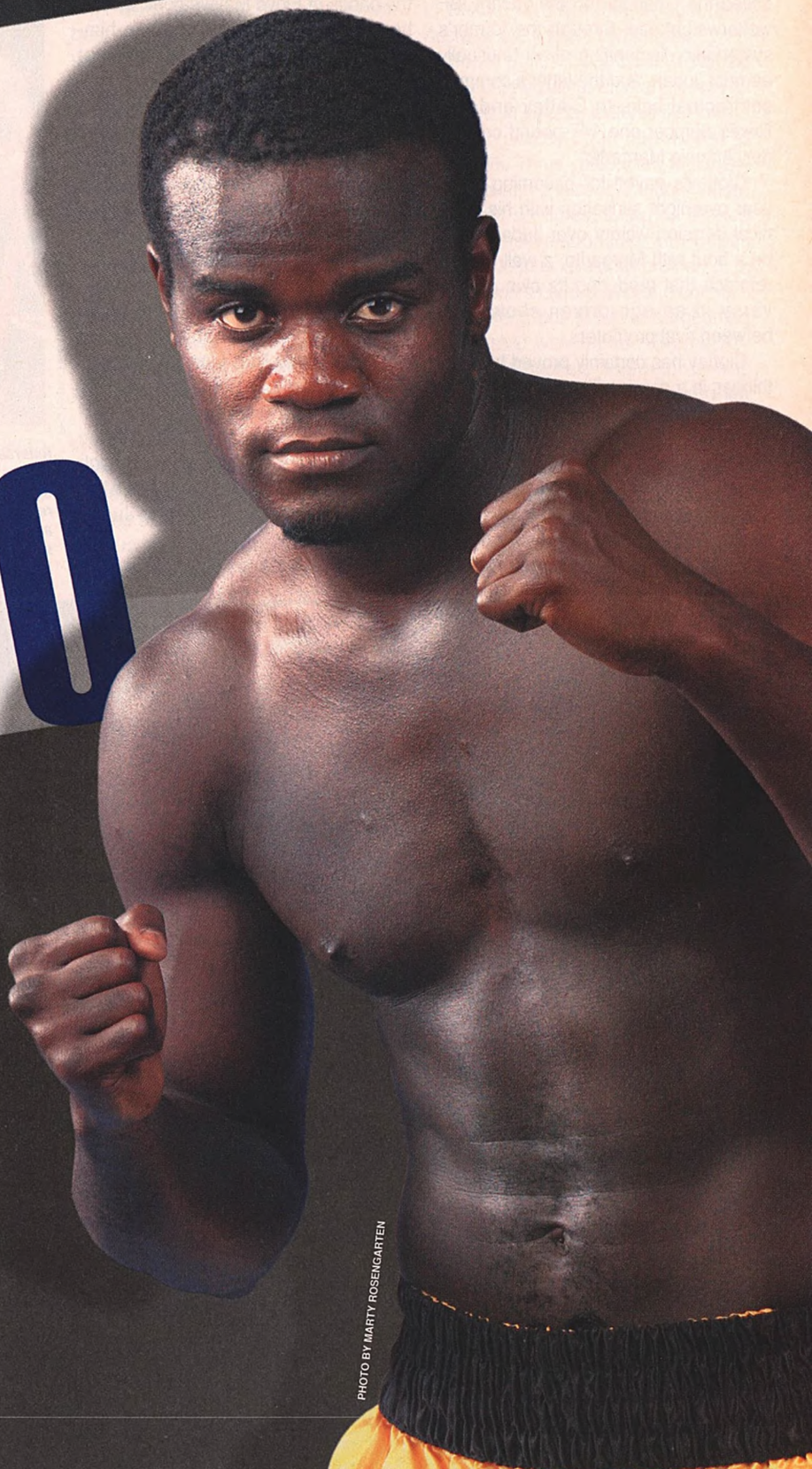


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

By hook and crook, one might say, Clottey and promoter Bob Arum propelled the Ghanaian to the vacant IBF welterweight title, through the former's systematic dismantling of an unusually earnest Judah, and the latter's common contractual links to Clottey and THE RING's number-one 147-pound contender, Antonio Margarito.

Clottey's payoff for becoming a 13-year overnight sensation with his technical decision victory over Judah could be a bout with Margarito, a well-earned rematch that produced its own controversy in an ego-driven showdown between rival promoters.

Clottey has certainly proved his worthiness in a division filled with outstanding fighters. Except for his 2006 decision loss to Margarito, when he claimed he injured both hands in mid-bout, Clottey's only other defeat was a disqualification in the 11th round of a fight he was leading, against a future undisputed welterweight champion, Carlos Baldomir. Almost seven years passed before Baldomir would lose again, at the hands of Floyd Mayweather, though had Clottey kept his forehead to himself, Baldomir would have lost that 1999 fight in London.

By then, Clottey had exhausted his options in Ghana. Next, he resolved a managerial dispute and moved to New York, where he changed promoters, endured frequent hand pain, and then changed promoters again. And when he finally won claim to a title—even if it was sanctioned by the utterly uninspiring IBF, which spirited Judah into yet another spurious shot at a vacant title—there was Dan Goossen, essentially declaring that Bob Arum failed to meet fiduciary responsibility to Margarito by forcing him to fight Clottey instead of Paul Williams, even though Arum had said beforehand that Margarito would fight the Clottey-Judah winner.

That the jam-packed welterweight

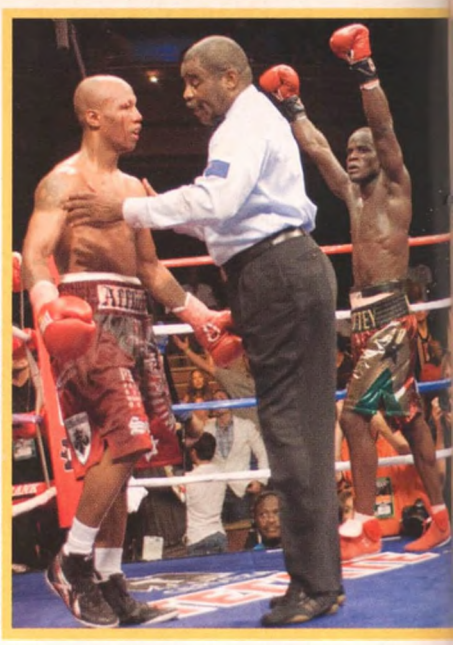


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Referee Robert Byrd informs Judah that the fight is over owing to the bad cut over his right eye, while Clottey celebrates a bit prematurely. The ref ruled that the cut had been caused by an accidental headbutt, and although video replays showed it was a punch that did the damage, the fight went to the scorecards anyway.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The Clottey-Judah fight was a free-swinging, entertaining affair, with both men scoring well in the early going. They were fighting for the IBF welterweight strap, which Margarito had relinquished in order to fight Miguel Cotto.

division warrants such heated debate makes it the cornerstone of professional boxing. Williams, currently THE RING's second-ranked welterweight contender, beat Margarito and warrants a rematch. Clottey dominated the early rounds before he was injured against Margarito and also warrants a rematch.

Miguel Cotto, who could not sustain his early pace in a loss to the sturdier Margarito—much like Judah against Clottey a week later, August 2, at The Palms in Las Vegas—will make for an interesting study in the boxing bounce back. So will Shane Mosley, who at press time was scheduled to fight Ricardo Mayorga. Add WBC titleholder Andre Berto, the Oscar De La Hoya (maybe) swan song, and perhaps Ricky Hatton, and the welterweights have become the destination point for the highest-caliber matchups, with all but the unbeaten Berto suffering relatively recent losses, and nobody entrenched enough to dodge anyone for long.

Clottey, 35-2 (20), is anxious to establish himself as the best-kept secret in a division of stars.

"I want to be recognized as the best welterweight in the world," he said. "My only goal is to unify the titles. Unifying the titles is my dream. That is the most important thing in boxing to me. If it is not Margarito, I would like to fight Andre Berto next, because they stand between me and my goal. But they will not stop me."

Margarito, even with five losses, is the hottest welterweight in the Mayweather-retirement era, and his order of opponents cannot satisfy everyone. The answer rests in Margarito becoming the pursuer rather than the pursued and fighting more frequently.

Clottey, who is single and the father of a nine-year-old daughter, Zeenat, grew up in a family of six children. Ali Clottey, a highway construction worker, pushed all four of his sons into boxing. Joshua and his older brother, Emmanuel, in particular, excelled at the sport, in keeping with the history of the Ga tribe, which produced virtually all its nation's greatest fighters, including the immortal Azumah Nelson. The Clottey brothers even trained at the same gym in Bukom, a downtrodden suburb of Accra where fighters congregate.

For a while, the brothers followed similar career paths. Emmanuel won all his fights in Ghana, took his first loss in London, and by 2000 had moved to New York. Three years later, with a 24-1 record and a loss in London, where he fought six times during an ill-fated promotional relationship with Panos Eliades, Joshua joined his brother.

Gleason's Gym provided a comfortable melting pot where a burgeoning relationship with trainer Kwame Asante would flourish. Asante once was a leading Ghanaian amateur who left his homeland 20 years ago after a dispute with the nation's top amateur boxing officials. When Clottey returned to Ghana after defeating Judah, he took advantage of his front-page status to ask amateur sports officials there to commit more resources to a largely untapped boxing market.

After more than two years without a loss under DiBella Entertainment's banner failed to produce much buzz, Lou DiBella, who by then was pushing Berto as his welterweight of the future, released Clottey in 2006. Clottey quickly signed with Top Rank, beat previously undefeated Richard Gutierrez in his first fight with the company, and then was steered toward Margarito before year's end. Margarito threw a CompuBox-record 1,675 punches against Clottey, most of them after the challenger began to yield physically. Clottey said his left hand began to ache in the fourth round and the right a couple rounds later. Clottey's sizzling early effort fizzled just as quickly, and Margarito steamed to a unanimous decision victory even though he also was nursing injuries, to the wrist and ankle. Nevertheless, Clottey's success in the

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

At the urging of his corner, Clottey stepped on the gas midway into the fight and began to punish Judah with jarring blows, such as this right to the chin. It was good for him that he did, as two of the three official judges had the fight even after eight rounds.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Clottey works the pads with trainer Kwame Asante at Gleason's Gym. Asante said that his main worry with Clottey is that the fighter will overtrain or try to ignore an injury in his eagerness to excel.

first four rounds became a primary reason others began to call out Margarito after some prior reluctance.

It also is the foundation upon which Clottey has built his belief that he deserves, and can win, a rematch.

"Margarito can be defeated by anyone who can counter his aggression and box him for 12 rounds," Clottey said. "He is very aggressive and very durable, but his tactical skill is not as good as some other welterweights. To defeat Margarito, you have to be able to box him and be durable enough to last the distance. Cotto boxed well, but did not last the full 12 rounds, or it might have been his night against Margarito. I certainly would have defeated Margarito if not for my hand injuries. Next time, it will be different."

Asante said the Margarito fight underscored both Clottey's best and worst traits. The trainer said Clottey's desire is so all-encompassing that he often fears the fighter will overwork himself. Clottey's impeccable physique is testimony to his work ethic, though Asante said even work ethic could be overdone.

"When Joshua fought Margarito, we were trying not to disclose that his hand was injured," Asante said. "Joshua fought through it, and that's the same way he trains. I never have to worry about anything with Clottey except when he tries to do too much. He wants so badly to be great, and is willing to sacrifice so much to be great, that I have to make sure he doesn't overtrain or try to work though an injury without disclosing it."

Barely four months after his loss to Margarito, Clottey scored a dominant 10-round unanimous decision over Diego Corrales, who was knocked down twice in what turned out to be his final fight, one month before his death in a motorcycle accident.

The 31-year-old Clottey followed the Corrales victory with three more wins to earn the Judah fight.

If anything, Clottey-Judah will be remembered for an incorrect ruling, even though the correct man's hand was raised. Referee Robert Byrd was positioned almost directly behind Clottey when he launched a short left uppercut that ripped open a gash above Judah's right eye. Judah immediately pawed at the cut with his right glove. Byrd called in ring physician James Game to check Judah, and ruled during the break that an accidental headbutt had caused the cut.

Clottey was leading easily in his first loss, to Baldomir nine years earlier, until a two-point deduction in the 10th round for an intentional headbutt. He was disqualified the next round after two similar infractions. Once again, against Judah, a headbutt played a significant role in the outcome.

Byrd stopped the fight at the 1:22 mark of the ninth, on the advice of Dr. Game, who reported that Judah thrice incorrectly identified how many fingers the he was flashing. And when they went to the scorecards, Clottey won by scores of 86-85 (George Hill, Glenn Trowbridge) and 87-84 (Duane Ford). Yet the fight was even on the first two scorecards through eight rounds, which meant the partial ninth round, which Clottey swept, was the margin of victory.

"There was no headbutt," Clottey

said. "There should have been no involvement of the scorecards. The result of the fight should have been a technical knockout."

Until then, the fight had been highly competitive. The last completed round, the eighth, was the best ebb-and-flow round of the bout, which contradicted Judah's penchant for fast starts and quick fades. Still, when Asante (in Ga) and cutman Miguel Diaz (in English) bellowed at Clottey for spending too much time in a defensive shell, the Bronx resident responded offensively, which diminished the offensive output from Brooklyn rival Judah.

"Judah started to clinch in the middle rounds, and the referee never said anything about the holding," Clottey said. "Every time I went on the offensive, he was grabbing and clutching me, and limiting the action in the fight."

As for whether Clottey deserves first crack at Margarito after the latter's scintillating win over Cotto, much of boxing is predicated on good timing, which he certainly enjoys.

Still, Goossen claims his man is better positioned, based on Williams' previous win over Margarito. Arum, meantime, happily rails against the machine by threatening to have Showtime do the pay-per-view telecast of Margarito-Clottey II. That would tweak HBO, as well as two old Arum nemeses in the Williams camp, Goossen and advisor Al Haymon, all of whom Arum once alleged were co-conspirators in the successful effort to restructure and ultimately break his promotional contract with Mayweather.

There is no question Arum would prefer that if Margarito must risk his title against a fast-starting counterpuncher, it be against his own conventional welterweight rather than a rival promoter's left-hander with a previous victory over Margarito.

However, while Clottey's case for a rematch with Margarito might not resonate as strongly as Williams', it certainly is stronger than Williams' case was for a career-rebuilding rematch with Carlos Quintana. Williams-Quintana II, which ended in a first-round victory for Williams, occurred because of a contractual rematch clause, despite the WBO's own rule against immediate title rematches. Without those shenanigans, Williams' viability in the 147-pound argument would be in restoration stage, just like so many other big-name welterweights.

By comparison, Clottey has five victories since his loss to Margarito, with wins over two former titlists (Corrales, Judah), two former title challengers (Felix Flores, Jose Luis Cruz), and an IBF elimination foe (Shamone Alvarez).

"I have beaten some very good fighters and become a world champion since I faced Margarito," Clottey said. "I am very deserving of a rematch." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Clottey did well in the early going of his 2006 bout with Margarito in Atlantic City. But the Ghanaian re-injured both of his hands during the bout and faded, while Margarito came on strong to win a 12-round decision.

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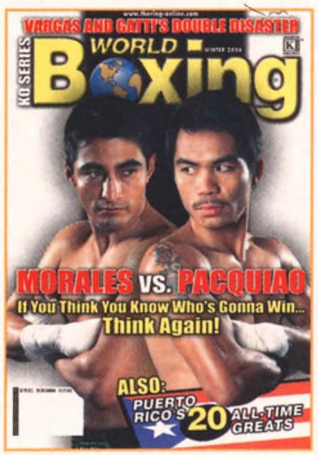

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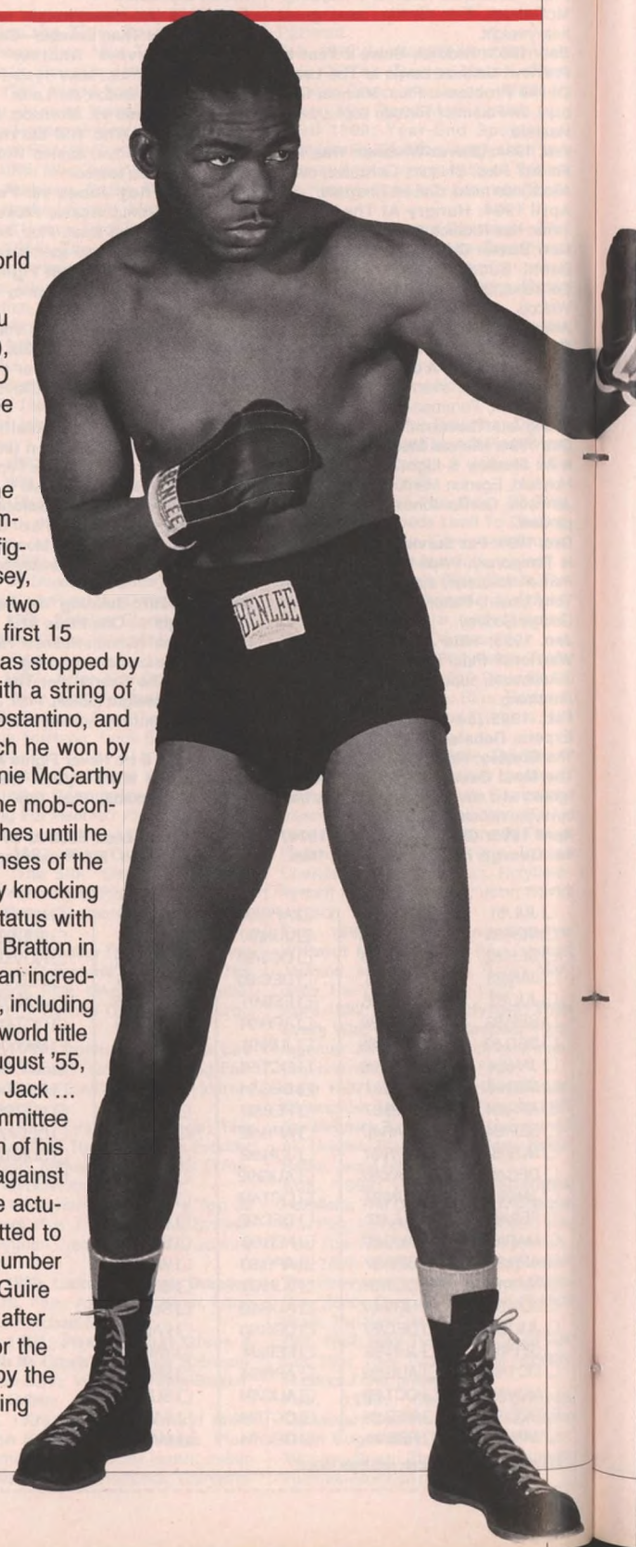
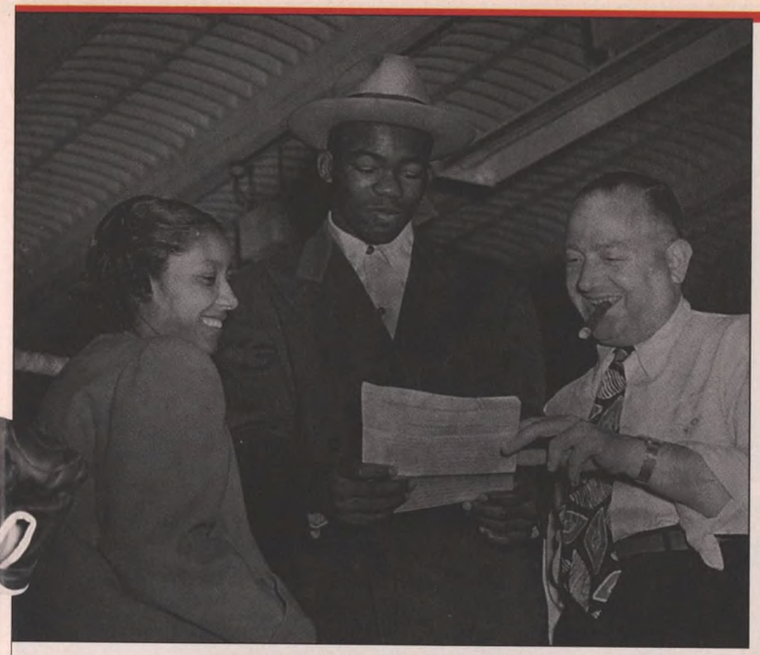
[Hall of Fame Profile]

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

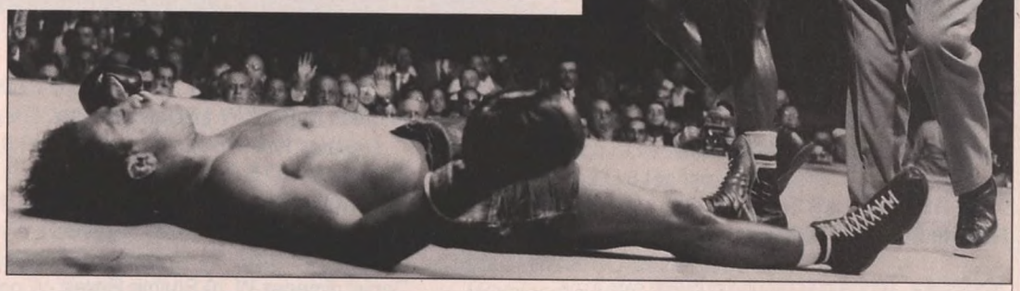
Ike Williams

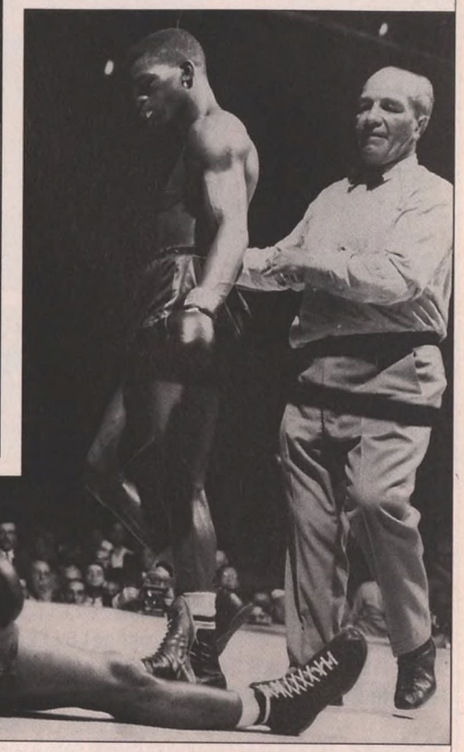


Birthdate: August 2, 1923
Birthplace: Brunswick, Georgia
Date Of Death: September 5, 1994
Weight Class: Lightweight
Professional Record: 125-24-5 (60)
Titles: NBA Lightweight (April 18, 1945-May 25, 1951), World Lightweight (August 4, 1947-May 25, 1951)
Best Performances: Bob Montgomery (KO 6), Beau Jack (KO 6), Kid Gavilan (W 10), Johnny Bratton (W 10, KO 8), Juan Zurita (KO 2), Enrique Bolanos (KO 8), Jesse Flores (KO 10), Sammy Angott (W 10, W 10), Ronnie James (KO 9), Joe Miceli (W 10)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1990
Background: Although widely recognized as one of the greatest lightweights of all-time, he would probably have accomplished even more without the involvement of organized crime figures in his career ... Moved with his mother to Trenton, New Jersey, when he was nine ... Started to box at age 14 and turned pro two years later, on March 15, 1940 ... Suffered four losses in his first 15 bouts, but then went on a 31-fight winning streak before he was stopped by Bob Montgomery in January '44 ... Reestablished himself with a string of impressive victories, including wins over Sammy Angott, Lulu Costantino, and Dorsey Lay to earn a crack at the NBA 135-pound title, which he won by knocking out Juan Zurita in April '45 ... Broke with manager Connie McCarthy after winning the title, which resulted in being blackballed by the mob-controlled Boxing Managers Guild ... Unable to get meaningful matches until he signed with gangster Frank "Blinky" Palermo ... After two defenses of the NBA belt, won universal recognition as lightweight champion by knocking out Montgomery in an August '47 rematch ... Enhanced his status with victories over future welterweight kings Kid Gavilan and Johnny Bratton in non-title bouts ... Named THE RING Fighter of the Year in 1948, an incredible 12-month span in which he went 10-0 against top opposition, including three title defenses ... Recorded five successful defenses of the world title before losing it to Jimmy Carter in May '51 ... Fought on until August '55, when he ended his career with another win against old foe Beau Jack ... Testified before Senator Estes Kefauver's 1960 Senate subcommittee that the mob had asked him to throw fights and also stolen much of his purse money, including more than $65,000 for title defenses against Jack and Jesse Flores. Claimed that the only fight in which he actually took a dive came against Chuck Davey, in '52. But admitted to carrying other boxers by "putting forth less than my best" on a number of other occasions ... Worked as a $37-a-week laborer at McGuire Air Force base and lived in a $11-a-week room at the YMCA, after his boxing money was all gone ... Stints as a boxing coach for the Job Corps and at a Trenton community center followed, but by the time he died of hardening of the arteries at age 71, he was living alone in Los Angeles, surviving on social security.

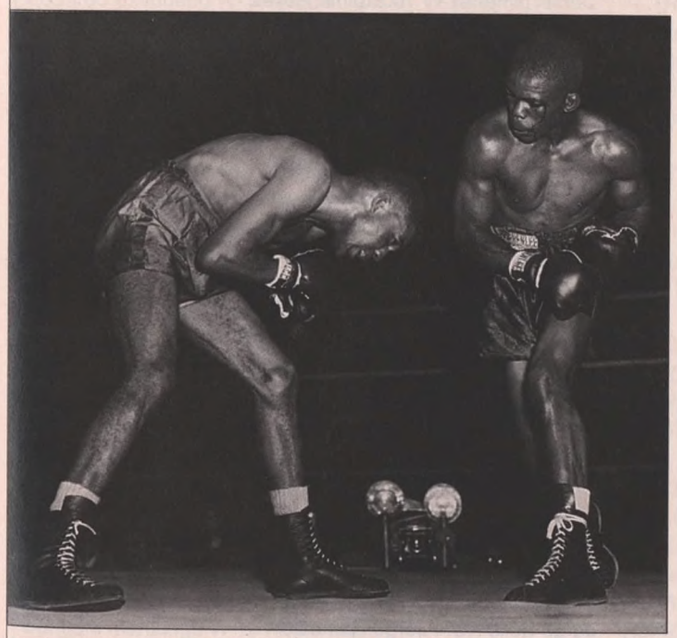


British promoter Jack Solomons and Williams (accompanied by his wife) look over the contract to fight Ronnie James in Cardiff, Wales. Williams knocked down James six times en route to a ninth-round kayo victory, September 4, 1946.





Referee Billy Cavanaugh steers Williams to a neutral corner before counting out Cleo Shans in the 10th round of a 1944 bout held at Madison Square Garden. After starting the years with a kayo loss to Bob Montgomery, Williams won 17 of the 18 additional bouts he fought in '44.



Bob Montgomery ducks low during his 1947 bout with Williams in which Ike avenged a previous defeat by knocking out "The Bobcat" in the sixth round. The victory also earned Williams universal recognition as the world lightweight champion.

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Williams poses with Don King in May 1994, approximately four months before the ex-champion's death.

[Summary]

Heavyweights
Nicolay Valuev W 12 John Ruiz
(*Wins Vacant WBA Title*)
Lamon Brewster KO 5 Dan Batchelder
Oleg Maskaev W 10 Robert Hawkins
Audley Harrison W 10 George Arias
Zoltan Petranyi KO 6 Mihaly Nemet
Timor Ibragimov W 8 Kevin Montiy
Kevin Johnson KO 5 Bruce Seldon
Kali Meehan KO 2 Dominique Alexander
Cedric Boswell KO 2 Roman Greenberg
Jason Estrada W 8 Domonic Jenkins

Cruiserweights
Marco Huck KO 12 Jean Marc Monrose
Matamba Postolo W 12 Michael Chilambe
Matt Godfrey KO 4 Emmanuel Nwodo
Ramiro Reducindo W 10 Felipe Romero
Joseph Marwa KO 7 Joe Mwale
Victor Ramirez KO 11 Mauro Ordiales
Jozsef Nagy KO 6 Zack Mwekassa

Light Heavyweights
Roberto Bolonti W 10 Martin Islas

Super Middleweights
Peter Manfredo Jr. KO 2 Donny McCrary
Isaac Chilembe W 12 Charles Adamu
Maxim Vlasov KO 4 Jonathan Reid
David Banks KO 3 Louis Sargeant

Middleweights
Danny Perez W 10 Julio Garcia
Arpad Buzasi W 10 Ferenc Olah
Peter Quillin KO 10 Sam Hill
Rob Kenney W 10 Max Maxwell
Wang Ya Nan W 10 Veronica Rucker
Billi Godoy W 10 Pablo Alberto Cortes
Arpad Buzasi W 10 Ferenc Olah
Anthony Bonsante W 10 Carl Daniels
Amin Asikainen KO 2 Roberto De Jesus
Daniel Edouard KO 1 Francisco Osorio

Junior Middleweights
Vernon Forrest W 12 Sergio Mora
(*Regains WBC Title*)
Grady Brewer KO 3 Brandon Wooten
Harry Yorgey W 12 Jason LeHoullier
Christian Solano W 12 Martin Avila
Daniel Dawson W 12 Welcome Ntshingila
Nobuhiro Ishida W 12 Marco Avendano
Ryan Rhodes W 12 Jamie Coyle
Roberto Valenzuela W 10 Luis Lopez
Vanes Martirosyan W 10 Michael Medina
Matt Vanda KO 8 Dezi Ford
Ronald Hearns KO 1 Alexander Quiroz
James Kirkland KO 2 Ricardo Cortes
Matthew Hatton W 8 Scott Woolford

Welterweights
Rafal Jackiewicz W 12 Jackson Bonsu
Matthew Paulley W 10 Mick Shaw
Oyewale Omotoso W 10 Samuel Colomban
Mike Jones KO 6 Juliano Ramos
Rock Allen W 8 Gilbert Vera

Junior Welterweights
Timothy Bradley W 12 Edner Cherry
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Andreas Kotelnik W 12 Norio Kimura
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Victor Ortiz KO 5 Roberto Arrietasuper
Danny O'Connor KO 2 Jose Guerrido
Danny Garcia KO 1 Tyrone Wiggins
Marvin Cordova Jr. W 10 Derrick Samuels
Daniel Jimenez W 10 Shamir Reyes
Mike Arnaoutis KO 3 Nasser Athumani

Lightweights
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 11 Joel Casamayor
(*Wins World Title*)
Juan Diaz W 12 Michael Katsidis
Randy Suico D 12 Nihito Arakawa
Antonio Pitalua KO 6 Jose Santa Cruz
Breidis Prescott KO 1 Amir Khan
Almazbek Raiymkulov W 10 Javier Jauregui
Aldo Rios W 10 Nazareno Ruiz
Enrique Colin KO 10 Rodrigo Juarez
Steven Wills W 10 Junmar Dulog
Jesus Chavez KO 9 Andres Ledesma

Junior Lightweights
Cassius Baloyi KO 3 Javier Alvarez
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Rocky Juarez KO 11 Jorge Barrios
Nicky Cook W 12 Alex Arthur
Mzonke Fana KO 3 Victor Manon
Jorge Solis KO 4 Jorge Samudio
Humberto Toledo W 12 Edinson Garcia
Kenji Kumagai W 10 Yasuki Takemoto

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Welterweight Danny Garcia is steered to a neutral corner after dropping Tyrone Wiggins

Urbano Antillon KO 4 Daniel Attah
Malcolm Klassen KO 2 Manuel Medina
Jaider Parra W 10 Pablo Osuna

Featherweights

Fernando Beltran W 12 Takalani Ndlovu
Elio Rojas W 12 Hector Velazquez
Eduardo Escobedo W 10 Miguel Roman
Carlos Velasquez KO 5 Jose Navarrete
Hiromasa Ohashi KO 4 Kumarnthong Por Pluemkamol
Matt Remillard KO 4 Adauto Gonzalez

Junior Featherweights

Celestino Caballero KO 1 Elvis Meja
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Steve Molitor KO 10 Ceferino Labarda
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Ricardo Cordoba W 12 Luis Perez
Rey Bautista KO 2 Eden Marquez
Toshiaki Nishioka W 12 Napapol Kiatisakchokchai
Wethya Sakmuangklang W 12 Jun Talape
Rendall Munroe W 12 Arsen Martirosian
Jeffrey Mathebula W 12 Julio Zarate
Roman Martinez KO 6 Santos Benavides

Bantamweight

Anselmo Moreno Tech. Win 7 Cecilio Santos
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Malcolm Tunacao W 12 Monico Laurente
Bongani Mahlangu W 12 Martin Mubiru
Eric Morel W 12 Heriberto Ruiz
Tabtimdaeng Na Rachawat W 11 Sande Kizito
Pia Mazelanik W 10 Fleis Djendji
Bandung Patavikorngym KO 9 Gun Tinular
Michael Domingo KO 9 Ratanachai Sor Vorapin
Jonathan Ba at KO 6 Richard Samosir

Junior Bantamweights

Cristian Mijares KO 3 Chatchai Sasakul
(*Retains WBA/WBC Titles*)
Jorge Arce KO 9 Rafael Concepcion
Konosuke Tomiyama KO 12 Kuniyuki Aizawa
Roberto Vasquez KO 1 Felipe Zapata
Nobuo Nashiro W 12 Kohei Kono

Flyweights

Omar Narvaez W 12 Alexander Hernandez
Koki Kameda W 12 Salvador Montes
Katsunari Takayama W 10 Javier Murillo
Raul Medina KO 2 Javier Chacon

Junior Flyweights

Ivan Calderon Tech. Win 7 Hugo Cazares
(*Retains World Title*)
Erik Ramirez W 10 Jose Ortiz

Strawweights

Raul Garcia W 12 Jose Luis Varela
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Roman Gonzalez KO 4 Yutaka Niida
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Ronald Barrera KO 2 Zukisani Kwayiba
Donnie Nietes KO 2 Eddy Castro
Ivan Meneses KO 3 Orlando Garcia

Vernon Forrest W 12 Sergio Mora

Las Vegas, Nevada: When Mora upset Forrest to win the WBC super welterweight title in June, the 37-year-old Forrest looked like he was ready for the rocking chair, especially during the second half of the bout, when Mora overcame an early deficit and pulled ahead down the stretch to nab a majority decision.

Most people scoffed when Forrest, like many losing fighters, claimed that he'd left the best part of himself in the gym, due to a prolonged training camp. But either Forrest was telling the truth or he's discovered the Fountain of Youth between fights, because he fought with renewed vigor in the rematch, regaining the title with a unanimous 12-round decision over the 27-year-old defending titleholder.

The fight, which was the chief supporting bout on the Juan Manuel Marquez-Joel Casamayor card at the MGM Grand Arena, was surprisingly entertaining for a match between a pair of counterpunchers. Forrest, 154, Atlanta, Georgia, assumed the unaccustomed role of aggressor, and by the third round was banging home left hooks and uppercuts on a fairly regular basis.

Mora, who needed two trips to the scales to make 154 pounds, lashed back from time-to-time with bodyshots, but spend most of his time avoiding Forrest's punches. They don't call the Los Angeles native "The Latin Snake" for nothing, and he did manage to twist, bob-and-weave, and dance away from a lot of blows. But unlike many of Mora's foes, Forrest didn't become frustrated when he failed to connect—he just kept throwing.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Forrest hammers Mora into the ropes

Forrest landed a number of right hands in the fifth, as Mora, his back to the ropes, couldn't duck fast enough to evade all the leather coming in his direction. Forrest intensified his attack in the sixth, manhandling Mora with a torrent of punches that threatened to overwhelm the Californian until More rallied late in the round with a flurry of bodyshots.

Forrest scored the only knockdown of the fight in the seventh round when he caught Mora flush on the chin with a hybrid left—half-hook, half uppercut—that sent the titleholder staggering into the ropes. Referee Vic Drakulich correctly ruled that he ropes had held up Mora and issued a standing eight-count.

There was a hint of desperation to Mora's work in the eighth, as he went on the offensive. It was enough to win him the round on THE RING scorecard, but he lacked the energy to keep it up. He did land a big right early in the ninth, but Forrest shook it off and had Mora on the ropes again by the end of the round, where he hammered away with his own right.

Mora tried to mount another rally in the 11th, but after he landed another solid right, Forrest, 41-3 (29), took over again, connecting with a hard left hook and an eye-catching combo. To his credit, Mora, 21-1-1 (5), never gave up and was still fighting as hard as he could in the final round, but Forrest's shots continued to be of superior quality.

Judges Burt Clements (117-110), Richard Houch (119-108), and Alan Rubenstein (118-108) all scored the fight for Forrest, as did THE RING (118-109).

"If I had lost this fight, I was done," said Forrest. "I knew if I couldn't beat a guy like this, I don't need to be fighting."

This time it was Mora's turn to make excuses, claiming he didn't have enough time to train. "I didn't lose this fight in the ring; I lost it in the gym," he said. "I was determined to push the fight, but my legs weren't there."

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**

(9-13-08)

Nigel Collins

Nikolay Valuev W 12 John Ruiz

Berlin, Germany: From the days when he was considered to be a circus act, drawing people to the big top in St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk in Russia before he traveled overseas, Valuev, 317½, St. Petersburg, has shown vast improvement. "He was like a freak of nature and he intimidated people," Frank Maloney, the one-time manager of Lennox Lewis, recalled of Valuev's appearances in London. "There was just one problem ... he couldn't fight." But victory

for the second time over Ruiz, 239, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Chelsea, Massachusetts, by a unanimous points decision at Max Schmeling Halle secured for Valuev the vacant WBA heavyweight title, and even Maloney might admit now that he can fight a little.

Of course, a little can go a long way in heavyweight boxing today, and the 7' "Russian Giant" is just about as awkward as they come, more awkward even than Ruiz, which is saying a lot. Neither the way that Valuev boxes nor the manner in which he prepares for fights could ever be termed "sophisticated," but Alexander Zimin, who coached the old Soviet Union amateur boxing team, has incorporated swimming into his training regimen, among other activities, and the result is a less rigid giant than we witnessed, say, when he boxed Ruiz for the first time. In the rematch he was better also than in his performance against Ruslan Chagaev, to whom he lost the belt before the WBA finally lost patience with the Uzbek's inability to defend it through illness and injury.

Ruiz, 43-8-1 (29), was frustrated once more in his efforts to get inside and inflict sufficient damage to Valuev, 49-1 (34), whose long, left jab was the most significant weapon in the fight. The Russian was shaken in the second round by a right hand to his head and his gloves did touch the canvas, but only because he tripped over his boots, and Australian referee Derek Milham correctly ruled no knockdown (no points for artistic merit either, one suspects). But Valuev's jab did pile up the points and, from the fourth round through the 10th, the 6'2" Ruiz was unable to achieve more than a modicum of success. Valuev dominated without doing much more than thrust his straight left into Ruiz' face. If it was drama the 10,000-strong crowd really wanted to witness, they should have gone to the movies.

Valuev, 35, rattled Ruiz, 36, with a right hand to the jaw in round 11, but the ex-titleholder came back strongly and finished the fight well. He was, however, too far behind for a strong 12th round to matter. Takeshi Shimakowa (Japan) had Valuev ahead, 114-113, and on the other two scorecards, Valuev was a clear winner, Ove Ovesen (Denmark) and Antonio Requena (Venezuela) scoring it 116–111 and 116–113, respectively. THE RING also scored 116-113 for Valuev.

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Juan Manuel Marquez

In the wake of Juan Manuel Marquez becoming the first man ever to decisively defeat Joel Casamayor—by knockout, no less—some were quick to downplay the accomplishment by pointing out that the Cuban is 37 years old and has been slipping for a couple of years. Those points are valid enough. But they ignore the other side of the equation: that Marquez is himself no youngster at 35 years old and was fighting as a lightweight for the first time after being a featherweight as recently as two years ago.

So it was a fading lightweight champion against a smaller man who has no business being in his prime. Both had their potential shortcomings to be taken advantage of, but both just happen to be among the best fighters of their time, and a victory for either man, no matter how decisive, was bound to be meaningful. And indeed, Marquez' 11th-round kayo was meaningful. In fact, alongside his close decision win over Marco Antonio Barrera last year, it probably ranks as one of the top two defining victories of his career.

At 27, 37, or 47, Joel Casamayor is no pushover. But Marquez figured him out and knocked him out. And THE RING isn't going to downplay that. Marquez is the true lightweight champion and the only reasonable choice for Fighter of the Month.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Valuev rams Ruiz with a long left jab

Predictably, Team Ruiz lodged a protest with the WBA, citing the punch statistics that showed Ruiz connecting with almost twice as many powerpunches as Valuev (98 to 52). But Valuev's jab was more than twice as productive as Ruiz' (99 to 49).

"John had Valuev running around the ring, despite the tremendous difference in their sizes," said Tony Cardinale, Ruiz' attorney. "When Valuev wasn't throwing that freakishly long, light-hitting jab of his to hold off John, he was holding and pushing John down."

Chris Meyer, managing director of Sauerland Event, dismissed the Ruiz camp's grievances as sour grapes. "His accusations are without any substance," said Meyer. "Everybody saw that Nikolay clearly won the fight."

Promoters: **Sauerland Event, Don King Productions**

(8-30-08)

Brian Doogan

Ivan Calderon Tech. Win 7 Hugo Cazares

Bayamon, Puerto Rico: "Iron Boy" Calderon will never be a major TV attraction. He'll probably never make a seven-figure payday. As a 108-pound fighter who almost never scores knockouts, Calderon's fame and fortune will always be somewhat capped. But he fights for recognition as the best tiny fighter of his time, and he's fighting for a plaque in the Hall of Fame, and he took another small step toward those goals with a successful defense of THE RING junior flyweight title against the man he won it from 12 months earlier, Cazares.

Their first fight, which saw Calderon move up from 105 pounds to challenge for the recognized championship on August 25, 2007, ended in a split decision for the Puerto Rican, with Cazares scoring an eighth-round knockdown and Calderon recovering well enough to cross the finish line with a lead on two cards. The rematch was perhaps a bit more one-sided and packed far less drama, but it was still similarly inconclusive. The fight ended 1 minute 58 seconds into the seventh round due to a cut caused by a clash of heads, and though Iron Boy was clearly winning, the bigger, harder punching man was denied five rounds of trying to line up a knockout shot.

As in their first fight, this bout took place in front of a partisan crowd at Ruben Rodriguez Coliseum, and the 5' southpaw Calderon, 107½, delighted his fans with slick moves that piled up points. Calderon, 33, was mostly frustrating the 30-year-old Cazares, 108, with his defense, but he was also mixing in just enough offense to keep the Mexican honest. Cazares reportedly had to lose about 10 pounds in the final week before the fight, and he appeared weakened and without the bounce in his legs needed to catch up with the slick champion, who was making his third defense of the RING and WBO titles.

In the seventh round, the fighters' heads cracked together violently, leaving Calderon with a sizeable gash in the center of his forehead. Blood began pumping out immediately, and referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) stopped the fight and ordered it sent to the cards, with the partial seventh round scored. All three judges had Calderon ahead, with Dr. Ruben Garcia (USA) and Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) scoring it 68-65, and Michael Pernick (USA) seeing it a surprisingly close 67-66.

Calderon, 32-0 (6), talked afterward of either unifying alphabet belts at 108 against the likes of Ulises Solis or Edgar Sosa, or moving up to flyweight if those fights can't be secured. Cazares, 26-5-1 (19), is definitely flyweight-bound, as he's simply outgrown the junior fly division.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**

Promoters: **Puerto Rico Best Boxing, Top Rank**

(8-30-08)

Rocky Juarez KO II Jorge Barrios

Houston, Texas: Barrios cockily declared he would end the fight inside of four rounds in front of Juarez' hometown fans at the Toyota Center. The colorful Argentinean didn't come close to stopping Juarez, but try he did, in an action-packed shootout between the two powerpunching junior lightweight contenders.

"When they told me the fight was going to be in Houston, I told them I don't care," Barrios said. "Rocky's family members can be the judges and it's not going to make a difference."

Instead of the judges, it was referee Rafael Ramos of Texas who made a series of decisions that would ultimately steer Barrios on a course to defeat.

After a relatively uneventful feeling-out opening round, the slugfest began in the second round with both fighters unleashing vicious powershots upstairs and down. Barrios had a slight edge in the first five rounds by throwing and landing the higher volume of punches.

But Barrios' early lead was reduced when Ramos deducted a point for low blows in the third round. Barrios' hooks appeared to land on the beltline, and even if they had been low, a warning would have been more appropriate than such a quick penalty.

The sixth round was pivotal for Juarez because he began to establish his jab. Stabbing the face with that pesky left while sneaking in power-punches, the local favorite forced the free-swinging Barrios, 130, into the uncomfortable role of fighting while moving backward.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Juarez beats Barrios to the punch

Juarez, 130, continued to apply pressure and dictate the tempo in the seventh and eighth rounds. Barrios never stopped firing his haymakers, but, faster on the draw, Juarez, 28, was the one landing the first and last punch in almost every exchange, starting with the jab and culminating with a bone-rattling left hook.

Ramos penalized Barrios, 32, again in the ninth round for a supposed low blow that landed on the beltline, which signaled the beginning of the end for the Buenos Aires tough guy. Perhaps thinking that losing two points would be too much to make up in a close fight, Barrios immediately went for broke and let loose a nonstop, two-fisted attack for the rest of the round.

Barrios relentlessly continued his whirlwind assault in the 10th, but Juarez deftly rode out the storm with a cover-and-counter defense, and it became not a matter of if but when Barrios would punch himself out. By the 11th round, Barrios' blows were reduced to pitty-pat punches that Juarez effortlessly walked through and countered with a vengeance, eventually dropping Barrios with a left-right to the head. Barrios beat the count, but blood was gushing from a grotesque gash on his lip, and Ramos, under the advice of ringside physician Jorge Guerrero, called a halt to the bout at the 2:55 mark. Barrios, 47-4-1 (34), did not protest the stoppage.

"I knew he would get tired and it was only a matter of time," Juarez, 28-4 (20), said. "I knew he wouldn't knock me out and I knew it was my bodyshots that turned the tide of the fight. My bodyshots started landing in the mid rounds."

At the time of the stoppage, Juarez was ahead by scores of 96-92 and 95-93 on the respective cards of Texans Ruben Carrion and Dr. Ruben Garcia, while New Mexico's Rocky Burke had the fight even at 94-94. THE RING'S scorecard read 95-94 for Juarez.

Barrios' trainer, Rudy Perez, bitterly protested Ramos' point deductions that spurred Barrios to embark on a kill-or-be-killed blitzkrieg. "I'll never come back to Houston," Perez said. "We fought against the judges, we fought against the referee, we fought against everybody."

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
Television: **HBO**
(9-6-08)
Peter Lim

Jesus Chavez KO 9 Andres Ledesma

Houston, Texas: Two-division former titlist Chavez had been plagued by injuries in some of the biggest fights of his career; a ligament tear in the right rotator cuff forced him to fight one-handed for 10 rounds against Erik Morales and a knee injury rendered him unable to continue against Julio Diaz after three rounds. Except for what appeared to be ring rust, Chavez, 44-4 (30), was unhindered by any physical ailments while stopping Ledesma, 14-11-1 (10), in nine rounds at the Toyota Center.

It was a textbook boxer-slugger matchup from beginning to end with Chavez, 134½, deploying his signature high-pressure attack and Ledesma getting on his bicycle and circling the ring.

Ledesma, 133½, proved an elusive target by constantly moving and abruptly changing directions, forcing Chavez to repeatedly set and reset for his lunging shots. The lanky Colombian found a measure of success from a distance with his long stinging jab and sporadically caught Chavez coming in with hard hooks and uppercuts. When cornered against the ropes, Ledesma adeptly bobbed, weaved, and

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Referee Gonzalez steers Chavez to a neutral corner

spun out before Chavez could inflict serious damage.

By the middle rounds, though, Ledesmaa began showing sign of fatigue and simply did not have the legs to elude his stalker as easily as he did in the early rounds. He began clinching and fighting in survival mode. The 35-year-old Chavez, on the other hand, found his rhythm and stride the longer the fight progressed. Cutting off the ring, the Texan began connecting at a higher frequency with his punches upstairs and down.

A big roundhouse left dropped Ledesma, 28, in the seventh round, and after he rose, Chavez trapped him on the ropes and banged away. Ledesma, however, defiantly fought back and survived the round. He even found his second wind in the eighth round, got back on his bicycle, and boxed Chavez on even terms.

But just when it seemed Ledesma was getting back into the fight, Chavez drilled him with an overhand right to the chin that dropped him heavily on the ropes. Referee Robert Gonzalez (USA) counted him out as he attempted to rise on rubbery legs.

"This was a real opponent," Chavez said. "I needed the rounds in order to look better. He was very tough. He connected pretty good, but he never hurt me. I need maybe another fight and then speak with the promoter about a future world title."

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**

(9-6-08)

Peter Lim

Timothy Bradley W 12 Edner Cherry

Biloxi, Mississippi: Bradley found out just a couple hours before stepping into the ring that his Showtime-televised co-feature had been bumped up to main event status, thanks to the Nate Campbell-Joan Guzman fight falling apart at the last minute. "Everything happens for a reason," Bradley said. "I thought I put on a great show."

Taking advantage of the spotlight, the rising junior welterweight gave a dominant performance against the veteran Cherry at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino. Bradley, 139½, outhustled Cherry, 139½, in the early rounds, then controlled the action with his jab from the fifth round to the final bell. It was a glimpse of the potential possessed by Bradley, who made his first defense of the WBC super lightweight belt he won by stunning Junior Witter in May.

The 26-year-old Cherry, 24-6-2 (12), started aggressively in the first half of the opening round, when he pushed Bradley backward and landed a couple of rights off the jab. But Bradley, 23-0 (11), found his range in the second half, when he landed a flush left hook and used his jab to take the round.

In the second, Bradley began effectively mixing right hands and bodyshots off the jab, while using his slick head movement to make the aggressive Cherry miss badly. "Cherry Bomb" came back to get the fourth, when he found his way inside more frequently and landed some good left hooks upstairs.

Bradley re-established his distance and his jab in the fifth, when Cherry began to slow down and fire less frequently in combination. The excellent bodywork by "Desert Storm" seemed to have much to do with Cherry's waning pace. The Bahamian's trainer, Peter Fernandez, dropped several F-bombs in the corner after the seventh round in an attempt to motivate his religious fighter, but it didn't pay off as Bradley landed a perfectly timed right hook over a lazy

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHT WIRE IMAGES

Bradley floors Cherry in the eighth round

jab to score a flash knockdown with 1:16 to go in the eighth, leading to an eight-count from ref Gary Ritter (USA).

"I just listened to my corner," Bradley said. "I just got my jab established. I wasn't using my jab enough early in the fight. Once I got my jab landing, I set up my big punches later in the fight."

Though comfortably ahead, the 25-year-old Bradley remained aggressive late in the fight as he continued to rack up points. He got a bit careless late in the 11th, when a suddenly energized Cherry connected with a right to the jaw from an awkward angle after Bradley missed two looping shots. Bradley weathered the storm, and then pounded Cherry's body throughout the 12th.

The Palm Springs, California, native finished comfortably ahead on all three cards. Bill Clancy (USA) had it 118-109, Raymond White (USA) scored it 119-109, and David Taranto (USA) saw it 117-110. THE RING agreed with Clancy's score.

"Bradley, he's a tough fighter," Cherry said. "He proved tonight that he's the best, he's a champion. He definitely came to fight."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(9-13-08)

Steve Molitor KO 10 Ceferino Labarda

Rama, Ontario: Junior featherweight Molitor had plenty to lose facing Argentina's Labarda in a voluntary defense of his IBF strap, given that a high profile meeting with Celestino Caballero was in the final stages of negotiation for November 21. But that is exactly why his brain trust chose to keep active against the undefeated but untested Labarda, 27, a 2000 Olympian who was fighting professionally away from his homeland for the first time. As expected, the Argentine proved willing but was overmatched in a fight that entertained a near-capacity crowd of 5,000 at Casino Rama for a few rounds before it became painfully one-sided.

Molitor's 10th-round kayo of Labarda, 121½, Cordoba, Argentina, may have earned him little more than an easy payday and simple workout, but to his credit, "The Canadian Kid" has stayed busy since winning his alphabet title against Michael Hunter in November '06. The Labarda win marked Molitor's fifth defense in a little over a year, and was the first under new trainer Stephane Larouche.

Larouche replaced Chris Johnson in April after a rift, allegedly engineered by Johnson, saw Molitor threaten to sever ties with his current manager and promoter and head stateside to sign a deal with promoter Murad Muhammad. Acrimonious breakdowns inside a camp usually hurt a fighter's ability to focus, but Molitor, who ultimately prepared for Labarda in Montreal alongside fellow Larouche charges Lucian Bute and Adrian Diaconu, showed no discernable impact from the temporary feuding and switch in trainers. In fact, with Bute and Diaconu at ringside enthusiastically cheering on their new stablemate, Molitor looked eager to make a statement with a dominant win.

In typical fashion, the 28-year-old Molitor, 121½, Mississauga, Ontario, started slowly, sizing up his opponent while allowing the first few rounds to go to the hard-charging Labarda, who displayed respectable speed and power. A southpaw like Molitor, Labarda managed to effectively attack the body and land several overhand lefts that kept the Canadian moving and attentive.

By round four, however, Molitor was reading his opponent's punches and doing mighty damage with a hard jab and perfectly timed overhand left counters. As Molitor began to close the distance and get off the harder blows, the effects quickly began to show on Labarda, whose shots were rapidly losing steam.

With Labarda clearly spent by round eight, a relaxed and patient Molitor assumed full control. Springing in and out of range, Molitor went to work on the body and opened up with solid combinations that had Labarda swelling over the left eye.

Sensing Labarda had been pushed to the brink of exhaustion, Molitor went into full offensive mode in the following round. He hammered home several short right-left combinations in the early moments before exploding with a straight left that had Labarda staggering drunkenly around the ring. Molitor then dropped him with a crisp right hook. Labarda beat the count and survived a vicious bodyshot before the bell sounded, but a stoppage in the next round for Molitor seemed inevitable.

In fact, round 10 amounted to nothing more than target practice for Molitor in a stanza that probably went 30 seconds too long. As Labarda wobbled, Molitor threw with impunity. That Labarda, 18-1 (7), took such heavy fire for a full two minutes spoke to his bravery, as Molitor assaulted his body and ripped home combinations to the head that had streams of blood jettisoning from his mouth.

Ref Charlie Fitch (USA), who won't be getting awards anytime soon for his compassion, finally ceased the bloodletting at 2:34 of the round with a helpless Labarda staggering in retreat, virtually out on his feet.

"I landed a lot of good bodyshots throughout the fight, so I knew it would just be a matter of time," said Molitor, 28-0 (11). "They were the key. It's something Stephane and I worked on in the gym, and it was the determining factor in the fight."

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**
(8-29-08)
Paul Salgado

Cristian Mijares KO 3 Chatchai Sasakul

Monterrey, Mexico: Depending on whether you mark a title reign as beginning when a fighter claims the "interim" title or when he claims the "full" alphabet belt, this was either Mijares' eighth WBC super flyweight title defense or his sixth, and it was his first defense of the WBA strap he won from Alexander Munoz in May. But whichever defense number you like, it wasn't much of a challenge. Fighting in front of a fired up, partisan crowd at the Arena Monterrey, Mijares, 115, Durango, Mexico, had his way with unworthy veteran Sasakul, 115, Bangkok, Thailand, looking much more like a powerpuncher than he actually is as he ended matters after just seven minutes of action.

The 26-year-old pound-for-pound entrant entered the ring to the explosions of fireworks, but there wasn't much in the way of in-ring fireworks in the opening round. A slick southpaw who boxes out of an abnormally straight-up stance, Mijares worked the jab, and with his longer arms, did so from a distance where Sasakul's jab repeatedly fell short. Late in the round, the challenger got in close and let fly six punches in a row, but Mijares ducked and slipped every shot, showing off his defensive radar.

It was nearly 10 years ago, in December 1998, that Sasakul's brief WBC flyweight title reign ended at the hands of Manny Pacquiao, and in going 31-1 since, he managed to avoid fighting a single credible opponent. At age 38, he just didn't belong in the same ring as a prime talent like Mijares, and it showed late in round two.

Mijares landed three good lefts to the body in a 10-second span, and the third hurt the Thai and led him to back away. With just a couple of seconds left in the round, the titlist landed another left hand to the midsection, but this was borderline low, and ref Toby Gibson (USA) stepped in quickly to issue a warning. As Gibson stepped back out, Mijares caught Sasakul with a straight left hand to the chin that he never saw, and the challenger crashed to the canvas as the bell rang. He rose quickly and a cornerman charged into the ring to retrieve him, thinking the round was over, but Gibson ordered the trainer out and completed his count, Sasakul stumbling sideways through much of it.

Mijares probed patiently with the jab early in round three, knowing he just needed one more good opening to end the fight, and he found it about a minute into the round, when a right hook/straight left combo staggered the challenger. Moments later, a short left and a short right dropped Sasakul, 64-4 (39), along the ropes, and he got up quickly but stumbled into a cornerpad, prompting Gibson to wave it off at the 1:05 mark without completing the count.

Mijares, 36-3-2 (15), will be in considerably tougher next time out, as he's scheduled to face heavy-handed IBF beltholder Vic Darchinyan on November 1 in a bout that will be carried by Showtime.

Promoter: **KO Entertainment**
(8-30-08)

PHOTO BY OMAR TORRES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Darchinyan is next for streaking Mijares

Andreas Kotelnik W 12 Norio Kimura

Lviv, Ukraine: With a predictably dominant performance, Kotelnik, 140, Hamburg, Germany, via Lviv, Ukraine, secured a lopsided victory over the brave but outclassed Kimura, 140, Yokohama, Japan, at the Sport Palace Ukraine to retain the WBA super lightweight title. It was the 30-year-old's first defense of the belt he won six months earlier by stopping Wales' Gavin Rees in the final round in Cardiff.

A silver medalist at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney where he was beaten by Cuba's Mario Kindelan, Kotelnik's only defeats have come on points against Britain's former WBC titleholder Junior Witter and Frenchman Souleymane Mbaye in a bout that most observers thought Kotelnik had won. The Ukrainian is a slick and accomplished practitioner. Kimura, 30, who had never before boxed outside of

Japan, possessed nothing other than resolve and ruggedness, and it was his courage that saw him through to the final bell.

Kotelnik's sharpness and well-honed counterpunching technique were apparent from the outset, and all too quickly he was threatening to overwhelm Kimura. His left hook proved to be a particularly productive weapon and he doubled it up to the head and body, taking few solid shots in reply despite the challenger's commendable efforts to go on the attack himself. Kimura, 34-6-2 (18), was too preoccupied with Kotelnik's assaults for most of the fight, and the Ukrainian tried to finish him off in the final round, only to run out of time. Judge Jean-Francois Toupin (France) scored 118-110, Juan Manuel Garcia Reyes (Spain) saw it 119-109, and Jesper D. Jensen (Denmark) had it 119-109, all for Kotelnik, 30-2-1 (13). THE RING also scored 119-109 for Kotelnik. The referee was Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa).

As this issue went to press, Kotelnik was scheduled to face undefeated New Yorker Dmitriy Salita, who was born in Ukraine, on the undercard of Joe Calzaghe's world light heavyweight title defense against Roy Jones on November 8 at Madison Square Garden.

Promoter: **Universum Box**
(9-13-08)
Brian Doogan

Raul Garcia W 12 Jose Luis Varela

La Paz, Mexico: There's an unofficial tradition in boxing that a new titleholder gets a fairly safe opponent for his first defense. That tradition was upheld in "Rayito" Garcia's initial fight as IBF minimumweight titlist as he took on the credible but unthreatening Varela and won comfortably over the 12-round distance at Estadio Arturo C. Nahl in his hometown.

In his previous six fights, Varela, 15-5 (7), had lost a lopsided decision to Ivan Calderon in a title try in '06, been kayoed in one round by then-prospect Roman Gonzalez in '07, and lost by sixth-round knockout to Yutaka Niida in another title shot in '08. Nearly all of the rest of Varela's fights resulted in victories, giving him a halfway respectable-looking record, but against top-caliber opposition, he'd clearly found himself struggling.

And Garcia, 24-0-1 (15), does qualify as top-caliber opposition. His only blemish is a 2006 draw against solid Sammy Gutierrez, avenged via split decision a year later. In February '08, Rayito won comfortably in a title eliminator against Ronald Barrera, and in June, he decisioned Filipino southpaw Florante Condes for the IBF belt.

Against Varela, 104, Caracas, Venezuela, the 26-year-old Garcia, 105, flashed his considerable boxing skills to pile up points over the first half of the bout. In the second half, Garcia took a more aggressive approach, and was just as dominant fighting in that manner against the 29-year-old challenger.

At the end of the 12 rounds, all three judges, Levi Martinez (USA), James Bagshaw (USA), and Alejandro Lopez (Mexico), scored the fight identically, 118-110 for Garcia. The referee was Jack Reiss (USA).

Promoter: **Promotora Eco Servicios**
(9-13-08)

Nicky Cook W 12 Alex Arthur

Manchester, England: A poor strategy combined with a poor performance resulted in Arthur, 130, Edinburgh, Scotland, suffering the second defeat of his career and Cook, 129½, Dagenham, England, being able to outbox him clearly to win the WBO super featherweight title at the MEN Arena in the co-feature to Breidis Prescott's upset win over Amir Khan. Arthur had been awarded the belt by virtue of winning an eliminator against Philadelphia-based Georgian Koba Gogoladze last year, and Joan Guzman, the former titleholder, moving up to lightweight.

With Cook having been stopped in the 11th round in his only previous title challenge, against California southpaw Steven Luevano for the WBO featherweight title last year, Arthur was the betting favorite, but he had struggled in his previous bout against England's Steve Foster Jr. Although he prevailed on points, the fight was close and he was floored in the penultimate round. Nonetheless, promoter Frank Warren offered the Scot a serious incentive if he could get past Cook.

"We were trying to make the fight between Alex and Marco Antonio Barrera for this show, but Barrera couldn't be ready in time," said Warren. "But he is a definite option for the winner of this fight. The other option is young Londoner Kevin Mitchell, who is undefeated and highly ranked by the WBO. But Barrera is a huge name and beating him would get Alex right up there in the world, recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. Whoever comes through between Alex and Nicky will be fighting again on December 6 against Barrera or Mitchell."

Quickly and confidently, Cook took his chance, opening up an early lead as Arthur, the bigger man, struggled to find his range and impose himself. Cook, 29-1 (16), scored in the second round with a straight right that pierced Arthur's guard and he followed up with a left hook off his jab. His assertiveness made all the difference. A one-two combination and another left hook to the head kept the challenger in control in round three and he landed another good one-two and made Arthur miss with a wild right hand before the bell. On work rate alone, he was the superior boxer.

Arthur, 26-2 (19), began to box better in round four, connecting with a couple of right hands that sent Cook backpedaling. Clearly, the Scot possessed more firepower. He got caught by an overhand right toward the end of the round, but it was his first round in the bag. After a very close round five, Arthur's strength won him the sixth. Several times he caught Cook, 28, with jabs and right hands, the effect of which was evident on the damage to his nose, but Cook turned the tide again in the seventh with two left hooks and a right to the jaw that knocked Arthur against the ropes. Arthur, 30, responded with a heavy right hand to the jaw before the end of the

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Cook digs to Arthur's body en route to upset win

round, but Cook remained more aggressive and he rocked Arthur again with two more right hooks to the jaw in round eight.

The Scot was simply being outworked, getting caught by long, sucker right hands and sharp left hooks in close. His own jab was virtually nonexistent and he was being picked off by Cook's left hand. The Dagenham boxer wilted perceptibly in the 11th round as Arthur tagged him with two strong right hands to the chin, but he finished strongly in the final round and deserved his victory.

Roy Francis (England) scored 117-112, Dave Parris (England) 117-111, and Terry O'Connor (England) 115-114, all for Cook. THE RING scored for Cook by 116-112. The referee was Mickey Vann (England).

"I really thought I'd done enough, but since watching it back, I think otherwise. I think Nicky won the fight," Arthur reflected several days later. "Prior to the bout we planned a strategy that just didn't sit comfortably with me. I'm a big super featherweight and I'm very strong at the weight. I think that anytime you've seen me challenge for a title fight of any nature, I've had a challenger's mentality, very determined, focused, and driven. Maybe my head wasn't in the right state, I don't know."

Promoter: **Frank Warren**
(9-6-08)
Brian Doogan

Cassius Baloyi KO 3 Javier Alvarez

Kempton Park, South Africa: Somehow the IBF junior lightweight title has turned into little more than a regional belt passed around among fringe contenders in South Africa, and Baloyi made the first defense of his second reign an easy one by turning away relative softie Alvarez in just a little more than two rounds at Emperor's Palace. Alvarez, loser of three of his previous five, had been stopped in nine rounds by Mzonke Fana a year earlier in a challenge for the same belt, and while Baloyi's victory was impressive, it was also wholly expected.

Baloyi, 129, Johannesburg, South Africa, was pinpoint accurate with the jab from the start, while Alvarez, 129½, Resistencia, Argentina, was less accurate as he tried to score to the titleholder's body. In the second round, Baloyi, 33, began putting his combinations together, and Alvarez, 31, showed little punch resistance. Left hooks and right uppercuts hurt the Argentine, producing two knockdowns before the bell came to his rescue. Just 28 seconds into round three, Baloyi, 36-3-1 (19), dropped the challenger again, and referee Sparkle Lee (USA) called an immediate halt. Alvarez fell to 35-8-1 (16) after what ought to be his last title challenge.

Baloyi now has a mandatory due against fellow South African Malcolm Klassen, one of the many who has briefly held the IBF 130-pound title since it was stripped from Marco Antonio Barrera in 2005.

Promoter: **Rodney Berman's Golden Gloves**
(9-13-08)

Peter Manfredo KO 2 Donnie McCrary

Lincoln, Rhode Island: In a bout between popular *Contender* alumni at the Twin River Casino, Season One runner-up Manfredo had not only hometown advantage, but just about every other possible advantage as he bowled over McCrary, who competed on Season Three of the reality show. A Manfredo victory was not unexpected, but that he accomplished it inside two rounds was something of a surprise. Among McCrary's seven previous losses were a five-round decision to Sakio Bika on *The Contender*, a 10-round decision to Yuri Foreman, a sixth-round stoppage at the hands of Allan Green, a fourth-round kayo to Lucian Bute, and a TKO at the end of three against Kofi Jantuah. All are world-class fighters, but none got rid of the St. Joseph, Missouri, clubfighter as quickly as did "The Pride Of Providence."

In McCrary's defense, though, the stoppage appeared premature. Referee Joe Luppino (USA) called it off at 1:34 mark with Manfredo swarming his dazed opponent, but not landing anything devastating, much like Manfredo's loss to Joe Calzaghe in his world-title challenge in the champ's homeland in 2007.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

McCrary crumbles at Manfredo's feet

"I wanted it to continue," Manfredo admitted. "I feel I was robbed of a spectacular knockout."

Not much happened in the first two minutes of the fight, as both Manfredo, 168, and McCrary, 166, took a cautious approach. Late in the opening round, however, Manfredo, 27, started connecting with looping right hands. Early in round two, with the 25-year-old McCrary, 24-8-2 (13), looking for right hands, the local fighter caught him with a flush left hook and McCrary hit the deck. He got to his feet and Manfredo pounced on the wobbly underdog, forcing the questionable stoppage to elevate his record to 31-5 (16).

Manfredo is now scheduled for another bout against a *Contender* grad, third season champ Bika. That fight will be in Providence on November 13 with Versus televising, and despite hometown advantage, Manfredo probably will not be the prefight favorite in that one.

Promoter: **CES Boxing**
(8-22-08)

James Kirkland KO 2 Ricardo Cortes

Austin, Texas: In the days leading up to their ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* main event at the Austin Music Hall, Cortes said he wasn't worried about venturing into the hometown of Kirkland, and predicted he'd box his way to a win.

Looks like Cortes won't be confused with Nostradamus anytime soon.

The former prospect had no answer for the storm that is Kirkland. An overwhelmed Cortes, 157, barely survived the opening round, and then was dropped in the second before American referee Gregario Alvarez' somewhat premature stoppage at the 1:59 mark. It was the fourth straight knockout within two rounds for Kirkland, 157, who continued his emergence as one of the sport's most exciting up-and-coming fighters.

Cortes, 22-3-1 (15), was coming off a first-round knockout loss to Alfredo Angulo in February. The San Jose, California, resident said getting to the 154-pound limit drained his 6'1" body that night, and his camp was thrilled to get an extra three pounds against Kirkland, 23-0 (20). The added weight didn't help Cortes get out of the way of Kirkland's bombs, however.

Fighting in his hometown for the first time since 2001, Kirkland went right after Cortes from the opening bell. The 24-year-old southpaw abandoned the jab, something trainer Ann Wolfe wanted him to work, and instead tried to take his taller opponent out with wild powershots.

Kirkland hurt Cortes with several shots throughout the first three minutes, including a hard right midway through the opening round, and had Cortes' left eye swelling by the bell. Staying in front of the onrushing Kirkland and attempting to trade, Cortes landed several solid counters, including a right-left combo late in the round that momentarily stopped Kirkland.

Cortes continued to find openings in the second as Kirkland let loose with, and usually landed, one looping shot at a time. It was a brave stand, but it was the wrong strategy against Kirkland, who hurt Cortes midway through the round with a left, then dropped him with a left hook to the body followed by right and left hooks to the head. After Cortes went down, a still-flurrying Kirkland landed another hook to the head, but somehow didn't even get a warning from Alvarez.

Cortes managed to beat the count, but Kirkland wasted no time trying to finish it. A series of shots backed Cortes into the ropes. Alvarez jumped in with 61 seconds remaining in the round, just as a battered Cortes landed another counter. The stoppage was a bit early, though it didn't appear as if Cortes was going to survive the round.

It was the sixth straight televised win for Kirkland, and his first since leaving promoter Gary Shaw during the summer. "It was fairly decent," Kirkland said. "Wasn't one of my best performances."

Promoter: **TKO Boxing Promotions**
(9-5-08) ■

 (Continued from Page 28)

child, bouncing from one relative's home to another, as his mother, who had Tavoris when she was 15, was raising five children on her own without any job skills or education. Getting into the ring with someone like Gonzalez wasn't going to rattle Cloud, not after surviving a hellish childhood that still pushes him to succeed.

"I'm a grown man now, but there are just some things you never forget," Cloud said. "I was eight, nine, 10 years old living with eight, nine other kids. I slept on the floor with the roaches and the mice. That stuff burns in your head and never leaves. Believe me, it happened 17, 18 years ago and I still remember that. My mother was working, but she could only do so much. For me, that was hell."

So that's what Cloud thinks of just before each fight. He flicks on a switch in his head and any fear that could be lingering in the corners of his mind during his ring walk-up is extinguished. It's a personal vow he keeps whispering to himself: *My daughter will never sleep on a concrete floor like I did.*

"This may sound strange, but I wouldn't change any of it," Cloud said. "I came up hard, but it also made me who I am."

The boxing mold was first shaped by one of Cloud's co-trainers, Alonzo Johnson, who works Cloud's corner along with Rodolfo Aguilar. Johnson initially met Cloud when his mother, Emma Smith, brought him to the Lincoln Community Center in Tallahassee, Florida. At first, Smith wasn't too crazy about her 16-year-old son taking up boxing. She had visions of the Parkinson-ravaged Muhammad Ali dancing in her head, and there was no way she wanted to subject her son to that.

But Tavoris kept pushing, and his mom finally relented, taking the 60-mile roundtrip haul from Quincy, Florida, to Tallahassee and back five days a week. The first time her son sparred and got his nose bloodied, she ran out of the gym.

Smith was working two jobs at the time, as a waitress and cleaning rooms in a hotel. The 14-hour daily grind was often overwhelming, and she wasn't always able to drive Tavoris to the gym.

Johnson came up with a solution.

"I moved Tavoris in with me," he said. "Tavoris' mother really didn't want him to box. It just became too much for her to go back and forth all of the time. She didn't object when I proposed he move in with me. I already had a few kids living with me."

In a month, Cloud went from a level one fighter, on Johnson's growth chart, to a level six. Cloud was eager to learn.

"By the time Tavoris was 18, he was the best 18-year-old in the country,"

Cloud took a step up in both class and exposure when he stopped Julio Gonzalez in August. The emphatic 10th-round stoppage came with a dangling carrot: an IBF title shot at the winner of the Antonio Tarver-Chad Dawson fight.

said Johnson. "His power was something that was always there. But it's something we preach here. We have a very strenuous training regimen where we go on whup-ass missions. We were just getting warmed up after the sixth round in the Gonzalez fight."

Cloud's biggest concern is not getting too intoxicated with his punching power. Prior to Gonzalez, the longest Cloud had ever gone was five rounds.

"Everything that happened in that fight I already knew I could do, especially if I had to go the distance," Cloud said. "People see a dude with a lot of knockouts, and they think automatically that's all I can do is go for the knockout. With me, that's not the case. I can box when I have to."

A week later, Cloud was still savoring his victory over Gonzalez in his Tallahassee home when his three-year-old daughter, E'lisha, came in from the backyard. He was spending an afternoon playing Mr. Mom as his wife, Eileen, a junior at Florida State University, was at class. He recounted how misfortune struck his family when his older brother, Ricky Sweet, who had been in and out of trouble throughout much of his young life, was sentenced to life in prison at age 21.

"We were raised in the same house by the same mother, but he didn't think there were many choices," Cloud recalled. "I wasn't doing too well in school, and the other option was to sell dope and get involved in criminal activity. That was pretty much what everyone else around me was doing.

"But what I learned from Ricky's situation was to stay focused and push hard for what I wanted to get; you make right decisions and your life will be better. I knew when I was 16 that I wanted to be a professional fighter. It's given me a better life, and helped me provide for my family. It made a better environment for everyone around me."

The screen door slammed shut again in the background and Cloud said, "No more sleeping on floors and no prison cells for me." Then he paused to call out to E'lisha, "Daddy is comin' out to play in a second." ■

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5974/08-08

Super Middleweight Eliminator

Jeff Lacy

Main Event 12 Rounds

Jermain Taylor

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Not that long ago, Jermain Taylor and Jeff Lacy were the toasts of boxing, a pair of young fighters widely considered budding superstars. Taylor had upset long-reigning Bernard Hopkins to become world middleweight champion, and Lacy had ripped through the 168-pound division and claimed an alphabet belt.

Then it all started to fall apart. First, Lacy took a nasty beating in a unification bout with Joe Calzaghe, and then Taylor lost the 160-pound crown to Kelly Pavlik. Suddenly, two supposed sure-shots had been reduced to a pair of question marks.

Now the former 2000 United States Olympic teammates are forced to turn to each other to resurrect their careers, when they meet November 15 on HBO.

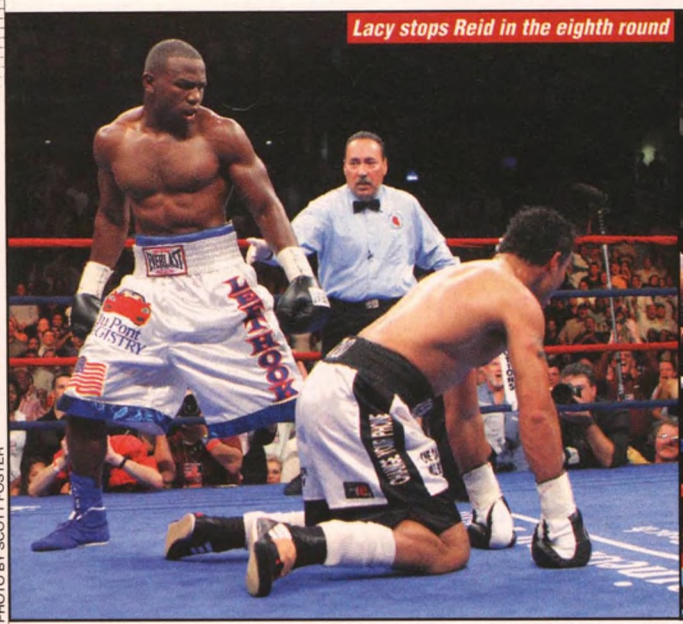
Taylor, in the throes of a two-fight losing streak, lugs a fragile psyche into the ring. Lacy is also burdened with doubts. Although he is on a modest three-fight winning streak, each victory was a struggle.

This will, in all likelihood, be the end for the loser as a viable world championship contender. And they both know it, which will not only add to the bout's intrigue, but also inspire the combatants to do everything possible in a desperate bid to regain what they have lost.

Jeff Lacy

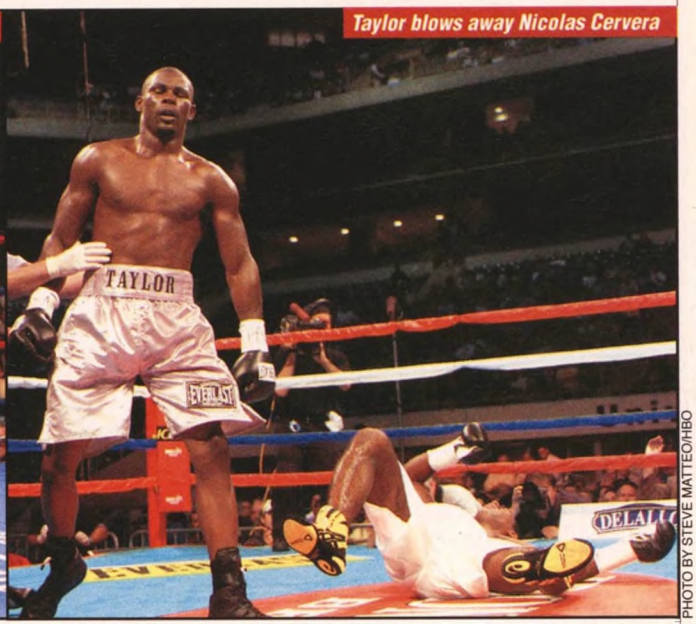
Jermain Taylor

Record and World Rating



Lacy stops Reid in the eighth round

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER



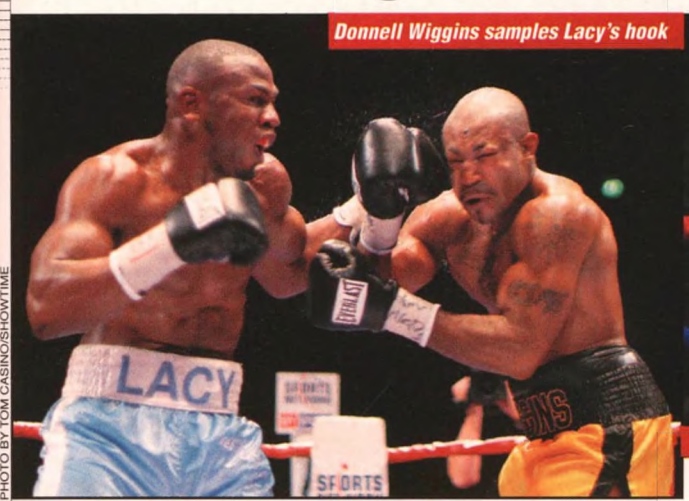
Taylor blows away Nicolas Cervera

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Is 24-1 with 17 knockouts and 1 no-contest ... Impressive 209-12 amateur mark, which includes winning '98 middleweight PAL national championship and '98 U.S. National Championship ... Made 2000 Olympic boxing team ... Reached third round of Sydney, Australia, Games ... Won vacant IBF super middleweight title in October 2005 . . . Made four successful defenses ... Lost title in March 2006 ... Is rated fifth at super middleweight by THE RING.

Is 27-2-1 with 17 knockouts ... Bronze medalist at 2000 Olympics and 1998 Goodwill Games ... Won two Golden Gloves and PAL championships ... Turned pro January 2001 ... Secured world middleweight championship in July '05 ... Made four successful defenses at 160 ... Lost world middleweight championship in September '07 ... Is rated 10th at super middleweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Donnell Wiggins samples Lacy's hook

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Taylor on the attack against Ouma

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Is 31 years old ... Stands 5'10" with a 74-inch reach ... Squat, thick build, with stubby, muscular arms ... Lately has shown tendency to cut and swell fairly easily ... Good recuperative powers ... Liabilities include lack of hand and foot speed.

Is 30 years old ... Stands 6'1" with a 78-inch reach ... Height gives instant advantage over most opponents ... Moved to 168 after having difficulty making the 160-pound limit, which he claimed was the reason for his late-round fades in last three middleweight title defenses ... Has shown better endurance in brief stint at 168.

Jeff Lacy

Jermain Taylor

Best Weapons

Lacy clocks Tsypko with a right

PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Wright takes advantage of Taylor's unguarded chin

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Devastating left hook still has to be considered one of the most dangerous punches in the division ... Also features strong right hand and accurate jab ... Cool under fire ... Excellent finisher.

Relies on punching accuracy behind strong left jab ... Very good upper-body strength ... Carries reasonable power in both hands, with overhand right most potent punch ... Strong starter.

Previous Fight

Had trouble for the third-straight time since suffering lopsided loss Calzaghe, but still managed to win a majority decision over the tougher-than-expected Epifanio Mendoza ... Survived a major scare in the eighth when stunned by a one-two combination that forced him to tackle Mendoza in order to survive ... Rallied back to win by scores of 96-94 and 97-93, and 95-95.

Lost non-title rematch to Pavlik in February ... Started well and appeared poised and in better condition than in their first fight ... Pavlik came on late, exploiting Taylor inside ... Pavlik was the more assertive fighter, throwing 845 punches to Taylor's 456 ... Pavlik's jab was the difference, as he threw 484 to keep Taylor at comfortable distance ... "The Ghost" won unanimous decision by scores of 117-111, 116-112, and 115-113.

Quality of Opposition

Has faced some light hitters in Ross Thompson (W 12) and James Crawford (KO 2) ... Battled some moderate punchers in Syd Vanderpool (KO 8), Vitali Tsypko (W 10), and *Contender* runner-up Peter Manfredo (W 10) ... Fought heavy hitters in Omar Sheika (W 12), Robin Reid (KO 7), and Scott Pemberton (KO 2) ... Began career with steady diet of journeymen in Jason Collins (KO 1), Tony Pope (KO 1), and Fike Wilson (KO 1) ... Suffered one-sided defeat to super middleweight world champion Joe Calzaghe (L 12).

Pair of close victories over Bernard Hopkins (W 12, W 12) head list of achievements ... Toiled more than he should have in beating undersized Kassim Ouma (W 12) and Cory Spinks (W 12) ... Also underperformed against Winky Wright (D 12) ... Victory over Raul Marquez (KO 9) looks more impressive in retrospect ... Also owns triumphs over ex-titleholders William Joppy (W 12) and credible journeymen Daniel Edouard (KO 3), Marcos Primera (KO 5), and Alex Bunema (KO 7) ... Lone defeats came against Kelly Pavlik (KO by 7, L 12).

Defense

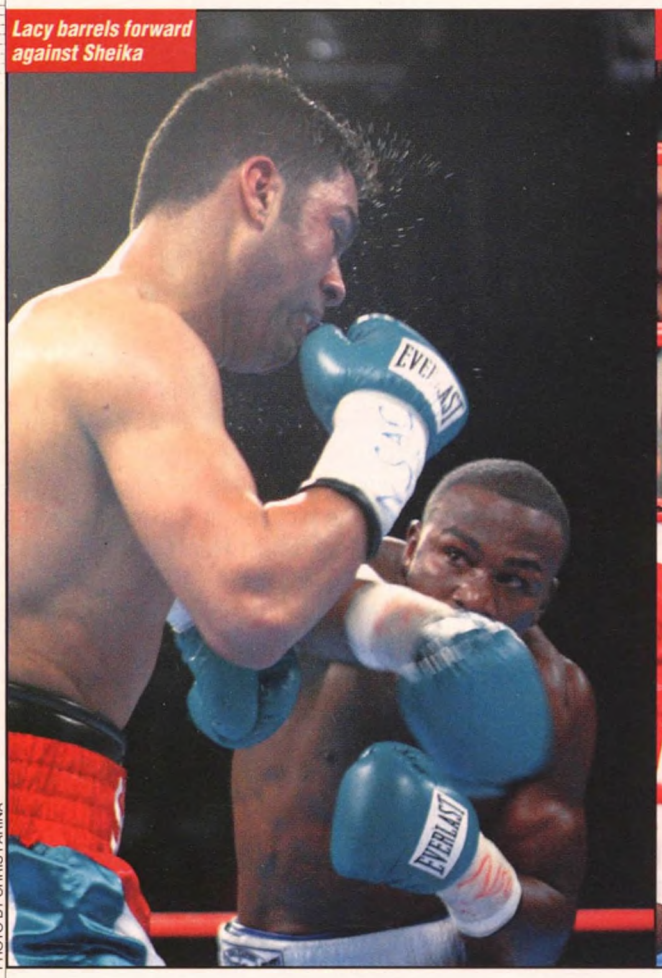
Spotty at best ... Attempts to absorb incoming salvos with arms and shoulders ... Sputtering offense no longer enables him to discourage opponents from stepping inside and setting up ... Leaves himself open to uppercuts and right hands ... Solid recuperative powers ... Sturdy chin.

Fails to consistently use range and jab to keep opponents off-balance ... Has the ability and the legs to move outside opponent's striking distance ... Tendency to get caught in corners and against the ropes, which proved costly against both Wright and Pavlik.

Jeff Lacy

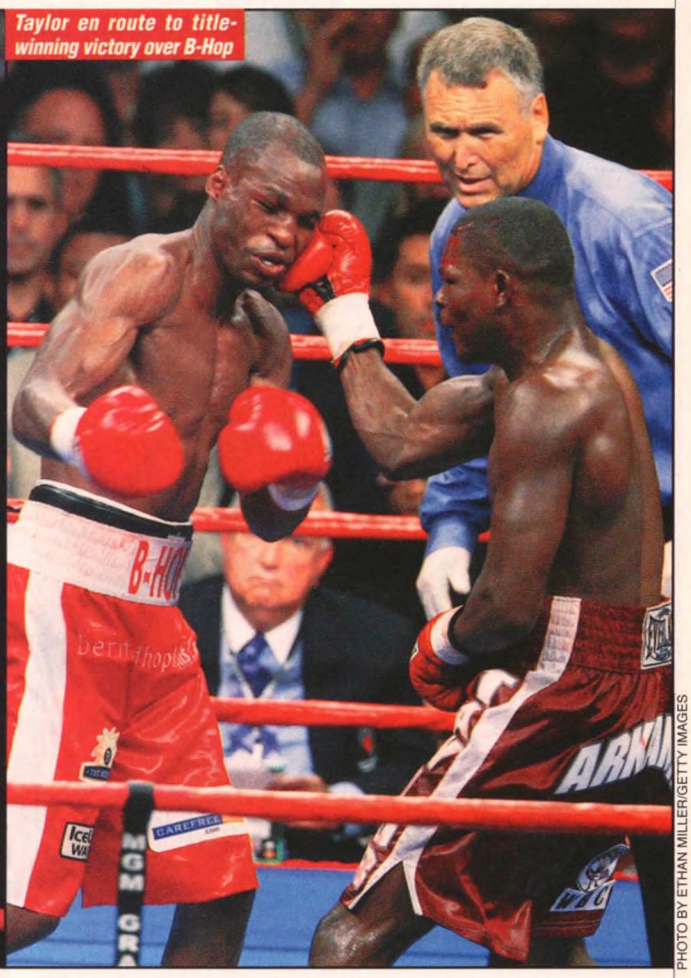
Jermain Taylor

Style



Lacy barrels forward against Sheika

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Taylor en route to title-winning victory over B-Hop

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Pressuring, straight-ahead approach that often has opposing fighters backing up ... Aggressive, patient stalker who relies on power ... Technically unsound ... Tries to muscle inside, using broad shoulders and arms for inside positioning where he can ply his vaunted left hook.

After starting career with aggressive, go-for-broke style, has become content to move and box ... Approach has become methodical and appears to be regressing as competition level increases ... Dubious confidence makes him cautious finisher when he has foe in trouble.

The Questions

Can he avoid Taylor's overhand right? Will he bring a sense of urgency to this bout, feeling this could be his last chance at a title fight? Has he ever recovered from the beating he took from Calzaghe? Is he shot?

Can he withstand Lacy's powerful left hook? Can he overcome the psychological trauma of two straight defeats? How effective can he be at 168 pounds? Will an emphatic victory over Lacy help him regain star status?

The Outcome

Call this fight Calzaghe-Lacy Lite, since Taylor will probably try to follow the same blueprint the Welshman employed to hand Lacy his only loss. The major difference is that Taylor can't match Calzaghe's hand speed and ward off Lacy's advances the entire fight. Lacy will engage more, but expect Taylor to use his superior boxing skills and jab to win a comprehensive decision.

November 1939

COVER STORY: "Ambers-Armstrong Bout Reviewed" is the cover headline accompanying C.R. Schaare's illustration of Lou Ambers wearing a crown, and there are several articles inside related to the rematch between Henry Armstrong and Ambers, including "History Repeats Itself" by Nat Fleischer and "The Foul Problem" by Ted Carroll.

World Champions

(for period ended September 15, 1939)
Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis*
Middleweight: vacant
Welterweight: Henry Armstrong
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Joey Archibald
Bantamweight: Sixto Escobar
Flyweight: vacant
*Although Lewis had retired following his January '39 loss to Joe Louis, THE RING did not recognize Billy Conn as champion until he beat Gus Lesnevich in November.

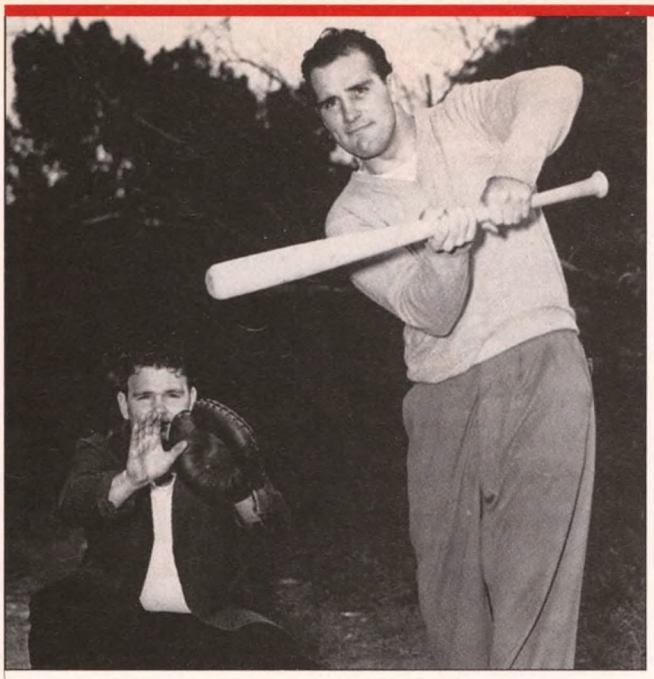
Armstrong had taken the lightweight championship from Ambers via 15-round split decision in August 1938, and their return match a year later attracted a crowd of 29,088 to Yankee Stadium to witness what Fleischer called a "savage affair" that "kept the crowd in a state of excitement throughout." It was also a highly controversial fight due to the fact that referee Arthur Donovan penalized Armstrong five points for hitting low, which cost "Homicide Hank" the 135-pound title.

"I am a stickler for rules. I believe that rules were made to be obeyed, but I also believe that there is such a thing as being too strict," wrote Fleischer, who said he would have had Armstrong winning eight rounds to seven without the penalties. "As some of the pictures in the movies and stills show, several punches for which Henry lost a round were just a shade below the beltline."

While Fleischer made no outright accusations, he did note that a lot of pointed questions were being asked, including "Was Homicide Hank penalized because of favoritism on the part of the boxing commission and the referee, Arthur Donovan?"

Carroll's piece took a different slant, discussing New York's no-foul rule, which, due to the advent of the foul-

Armstrong hammers Ambers, but couldn't beat the referee



Jackie Conn catches while his big brother Billy bats

proof cup, said that no fighter should win a bout on a foul. Instead, referees could penalize the offending fighter the round. That system worked well most of the time, but because the decision whether or not to dock a fighter was left entirely up to the ref, problems could arise, as they did in Ambers-Armstrong II.

"The question agitating all parties concerned with the boxing game right now is just how hard and how low should a punch be to cause the offending fighter the loss of a round," wrote Carroll. "Most of the out-of-bounds blows that cost Armstrong five rounds and the loss of his title did not seem to be of sufficient force to call for such a penalty. This represents not only THE RING's opinion, but it also seems to be the majority opinion of both ringsiders and writers."

"Broadcast From New York" by Eddie Borden also rips Donovan's mishandling of the Ambers-Armstrong bout: "The decision was a most objectionable one so far as the public was concerned, and that Arthur Donovan, in my opinion, lost considerable prestige," wrote Borden. Today, virtually all historians consider the decision a blatant robbery.

"Those Fighting Conns" by Daniel M. Daniel profiles soon-to-be light heavyweight champion Billy and his younger brother, Jackie, with the main focus on their nonstop bickering. "Not because they do not love each other as brothers should, but basically they are aggressiveness itself—battlers from the word go."

Daniels also wrote about Jackie's potential: "There are experts who tell me that, within two years, Jackie will be able to beat Billy, and that in the Conn family of Pittsburgh the real man to watch for the future is this breezy, fun-loving tough lad, Jackie."

Those experts were wrong. Although Jackie won his first nine pro bouts, he went 4-4 in the next eight, and retired with a modest 13-4 (4) record.

"Nat Fleischer Says" mentions the death of former featherweight champion "Torpedo" Billy Mitchell at the age of 77, and emphasizes that he really was dead ... this time!

Four years earlier, following a fatal automobile accident in Mitchell's native Australia, THE RING had published a tribute to the old champ. But it turned out that the fellow who died was another man with the same name. Satisfied that the real Mitchell was now actually dead, Fleischer published a letter "Torpedo Billy" had sent after reading his own obituary.

"Just a few lines to tell you how much I chuckled over your fine story about me in THE RING. It is great to be able to read of one's own death and see what real pals think of your deeds on earth."

"Continental News" by George Farmer makes note of a card held in Monte Carlo "before a crowd that included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and a gathering of socialites that transformed the ringside into a social register." In the main event, England's undefeated Peter Kane stopped French bantamweight champ Pierre Louis in the third round.

"Smoke Rings From Pittsburgh" by Ray M. Todd features a card that attracted 16,000 fans to Forbes Field to witness four 10-rounders. Fred Apostoli won a "very tame" decision over Glen Lee in the main event, Charlie Burley decisioned Jimmy Leto, Ken Overlin decisioned Al Wardlow, and Sammy Angott "stole the show" by avenging two previous defeats by outpointing Billy Marquart. ■

Angott stole the show in Pittsburgh

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Vol. III, 2005: Cover Story: Glen Johnson—Fighter of the Year. **Bonus Issue:** The Year In Pictures. **Also Inside:** Year-end awards, Vitali Klitschko, Jermain Taylor & Jeff Lacy.

Vol. IV, 2005: Cover Story: 20 At 40: How Much More Can Hopkins Accomplish Before 41? **Magazine Within A Magazine:** 20 Years Later: Hagler vs. Hearns Revisited. **Also Inside:** Trinidad-Wright preview, Hasim Rahman, Tszyu-Hatton preview, Larios-McCullough, Max Schmeling.

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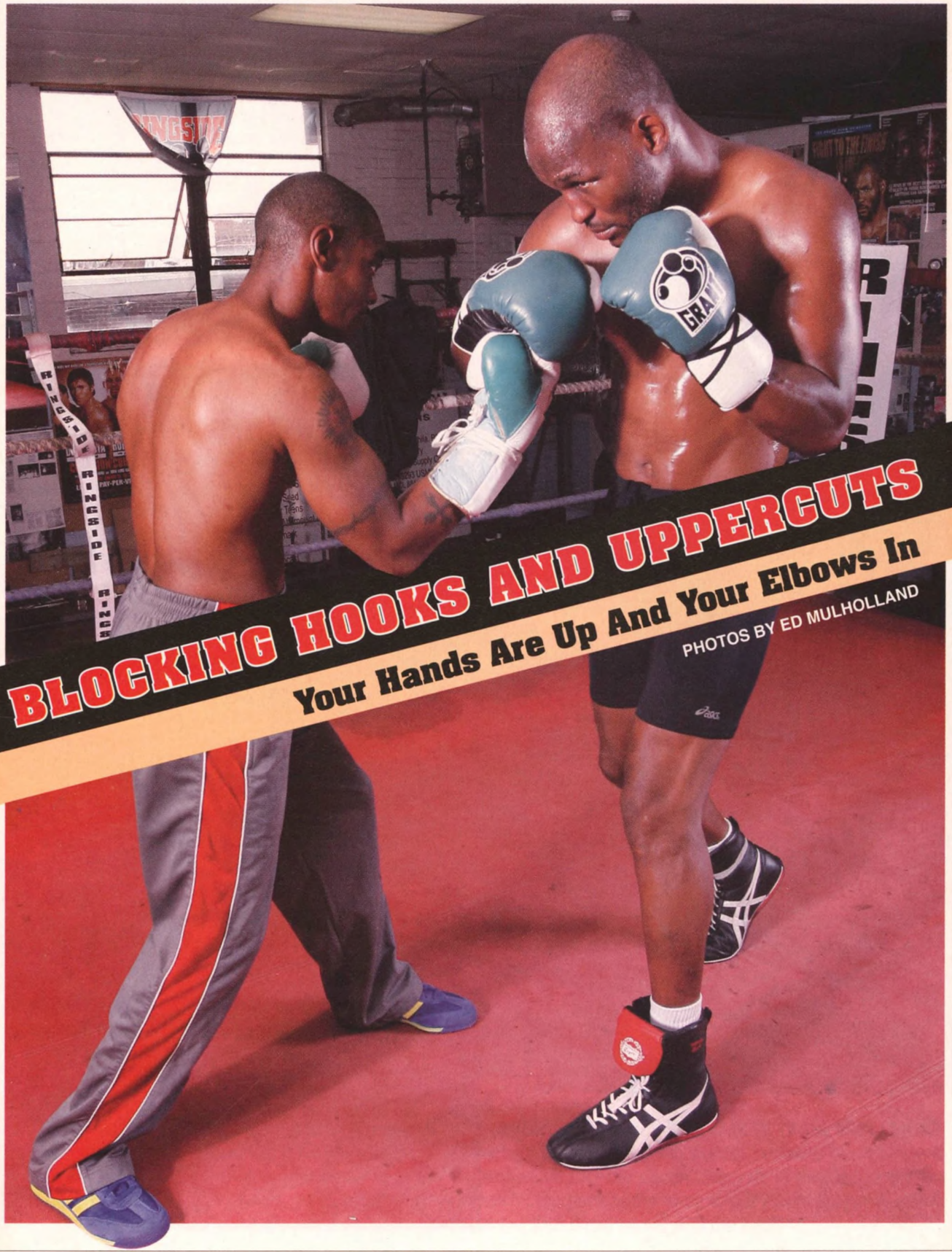
Perfect Execution

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



BLOCKING HOOKS AND UPPERCUTS

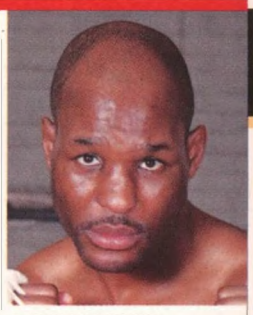
Your Hands Are Up And Your Elbows In

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

In last issue's column we talked about blocking straight punches—jabs and right hands. This month we'll go over blocking hooks and uppercuts, punches that come from the side and underneath. It may not sound like a big difference, but the way you block those punches is different from the way you block straight punches.

Putting up your fist to block a punch may seem like common sense, but it isn't. Like everything else in boxing, it takes time to learn how to do it right. And it starts with having your hands up and your elbows in, which we talked about in the column about stance. Everything comes back to that, especially when it comes to blocking punches.

If you take a guy off the street and throw him in a ring and tell him to block punches, it will look a lot different than watching an experienced, smart fighter do it. Some good fighters hardly block punches at all; they use head and foot movement. For other fighters, like Winky Wright, 90 percent of their defense is blocking punches. The best fighters do both well. That's one of the reasons I was able to bust up and beat Winky when we fought in 2007. He had only one defense, and I was able to figure out how to beat it. But as Winky would tell you, too, there's a science to blocking, like everything else in the ring. Danny Davis helps me show how it's done.



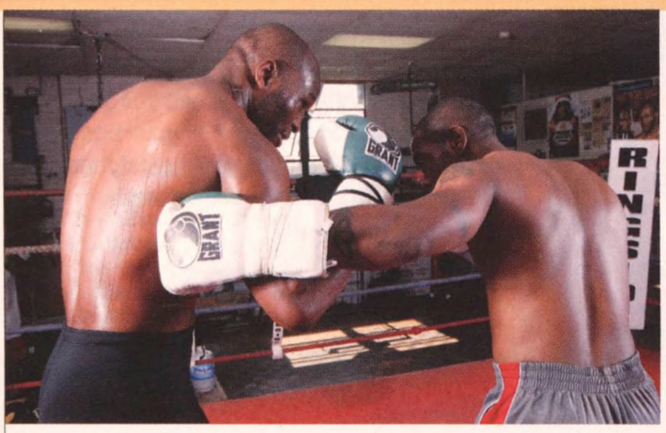
BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

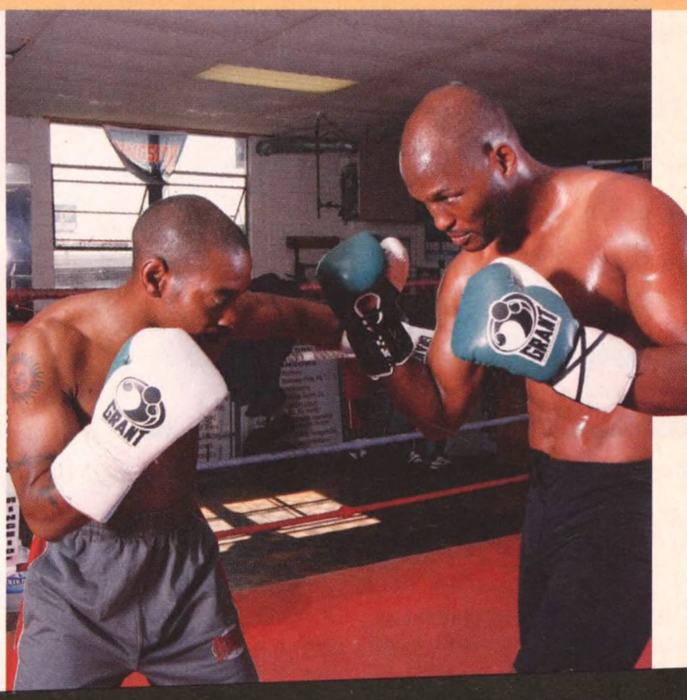
(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

BLOCKING THE HOOK

MY CHIN IS DOWN AND MY RIGHT HAND IS UP. Notice that I'm moving in when I block it, not leaning back. Just like when you slip a punch, you want to move closer to your opponent when you're blocking a hook to the head so you can be in position to land your own punch. Also, my eyes are on my opponent, as always, looking for an opening.

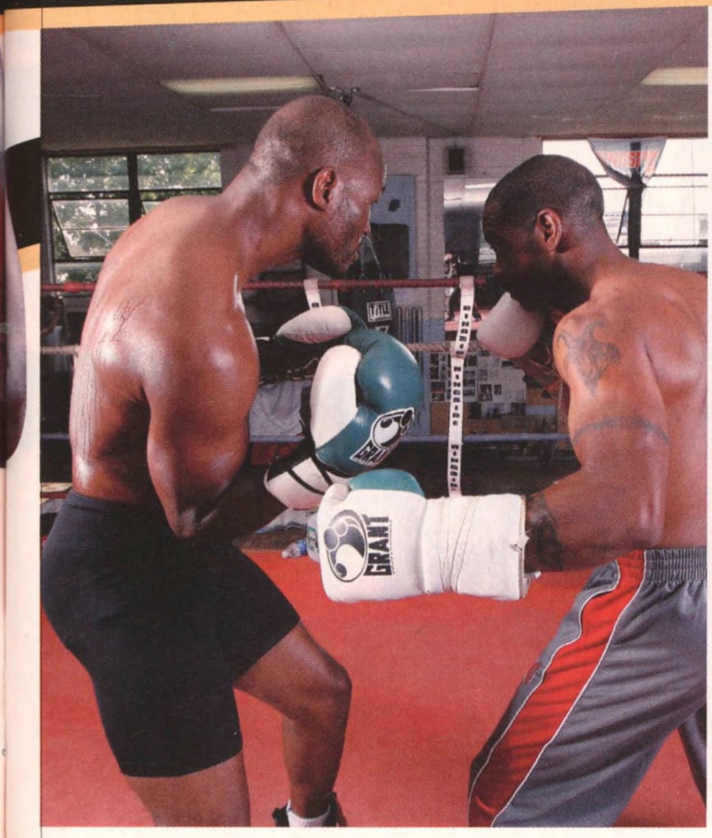
BLOCKING THE HOOK DOWNSTAIRS

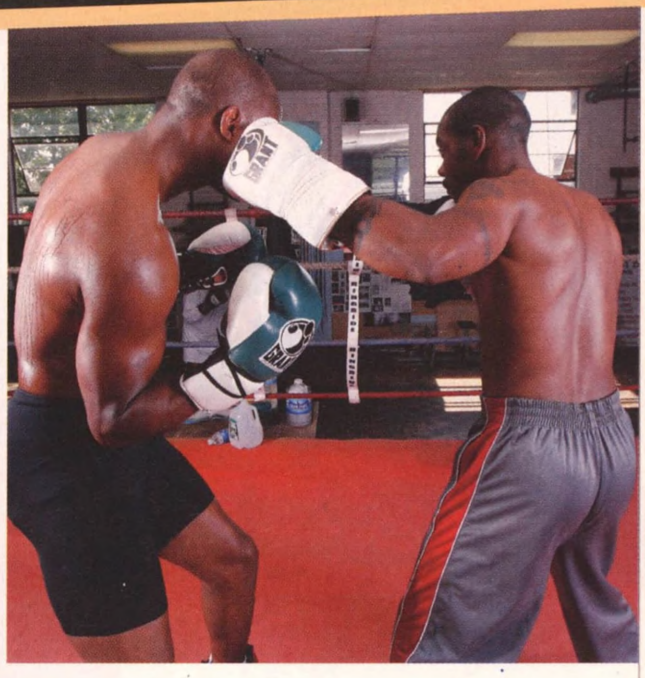




IF YOUR OPPONENT HAS A GOOD LEFT HOOK, HE'S GOING TO THROW IT TO YOUR BODY. You'll find out that getting hit there is no fun. Keep that elbow in, let the punch come in, and take it on your arm. Remember that fighters are taught to go to the head right after the body, so keep your right hand up, because the hook to the head will come right after. Here's how it looks from both the front and back.

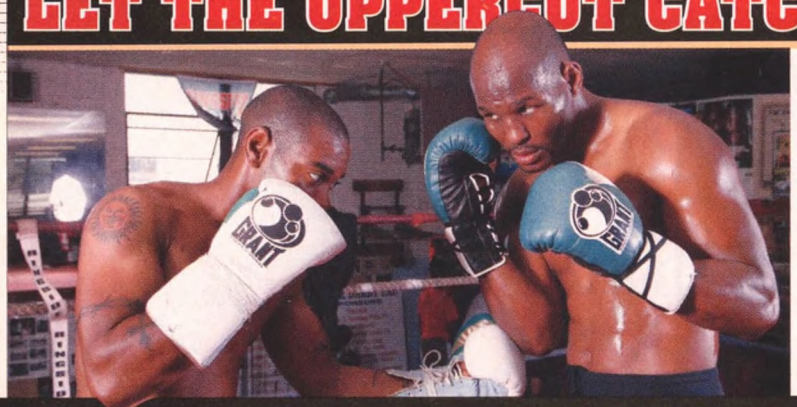
THE WRONG WAY





WHEN YOU THINK YOU SEE THE HOOK TO THE BODY COMING, you'll want to drop down that right elbow to block it instead of waiting for the punch. Don't do it! Your opponent will feint the hook to the body to get you to drop that elbow, and then come up top with the hook.

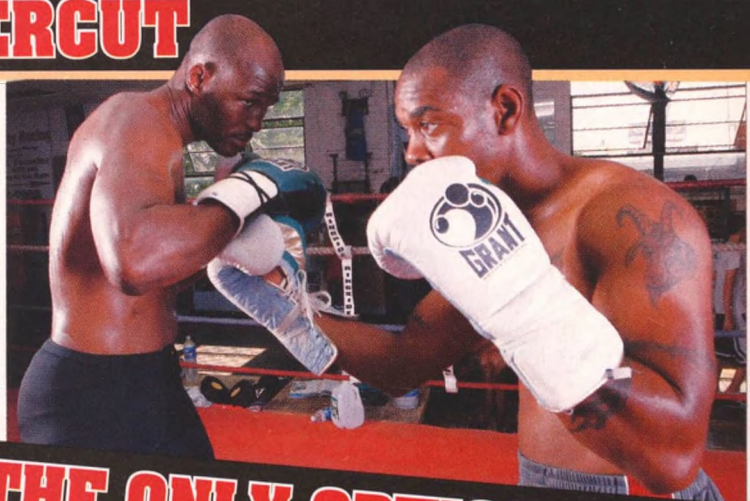
LET THE UPPERCUT CATCH YOUR ELBOW



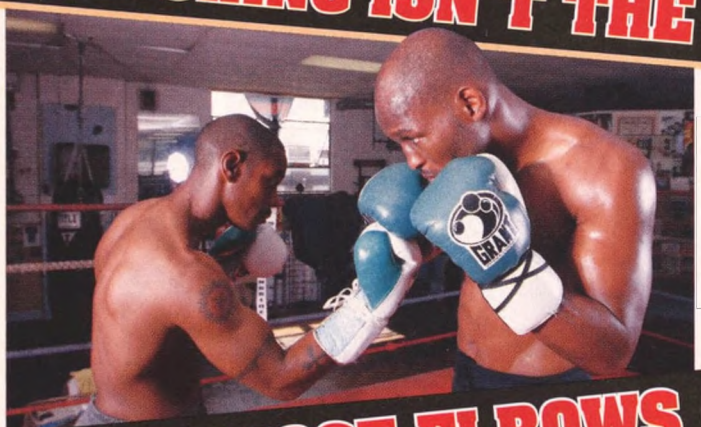
ONE OF THE HARDEST PARTS ON YOUR BODY IS THE POINT OF YOUR ELBOW. When you see your opponent trying to uppercut to your body, get those elbows straight down. If he catches you on the point, he could break his hand.

CATCH THE UPPERCUT

THIS IS A LITTLE DANGEROUS because you've got to bring your hand down from its position on the side of your head, so you have to make sure the uppercut is coming when you do it. It takes a lot of practice and good timing to do it, but it's a good way to block an uppercut upstairs and puts you in position to land the left hook.



CATCHING ISN'T THE ONLY OPTION



YOU CAN BLOCK THE UPPERCUT also just by keeping your hands up and tight around your face, which you should be doing when you're close to your opponent anyway. It's safer than catching it, but doesn't create the punching position that catching it does.

USE THOSE ELBOWS

JUST AS WITH THE LEFT, LET THAT RIGHT UPPERCUT to the body run into your arm or elbow. And always watch for the opening to throw your counter.

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Feb. 1983: Howard Davis Jr.: "Why I'll Win The Lightweight Title This Time!" Also: Snipes, Fletcher-Green, Mustafa Muhammad, Tubbs.

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Sept. 1984: Gerry Cooney's Comeback: The 12 Herculean Tasks He Must Complete. Also: Jack Sharkey, Holmes-Foreman dream fight, Jack Johnson, That Wonderful Year: 1958.
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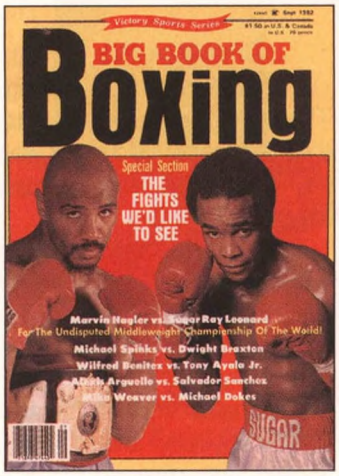

Napoles-Griffith, Ali, Charles, 10 meanest fighters, Spinks-Galindez dream fight.

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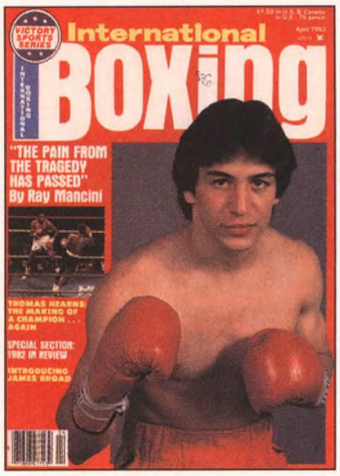

Month-By-Month Recap Of 1988. Includes: Tyson, Bruno, Hearns, Armstrong.
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July 1998: Tyson, Tapia, Martin, Manfredy-Gatti. 36 all-color pages.
September 1998: Lewis-Briggs, Chavez, Trinidad, Foreman, Phillips, De La Hoya, sluggers. 36 all-color pages.
Winter 1998: De La Hoya Special. Includes double-sided 21" x 30" poster.
Spring 1999: Holyfield vs. Lewis special. Preview & analysis, biofiles, tale of the tape, key questions, pro records, experts' picks.

THE RING DIGEST

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By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Nevada Needs To Go With The Flow

What separates a good ring physician from a great one is understanding the flow of a fight. It is the only way to accurately determine when a bout should be stopped for medical reasons.

A fight, whether one round or 12, has a beginning, middle, and end. It is easy to get caught up in the moment, and it is easy for the doctor to sit on his hands and look in control. After all, if the doctor never recommends a fight cease, he escapes controversy and blame, since the media typically targets the corner for not stopping the fight.

But the media is wrong. The doctor is there to step in and prevent serious injury. Unfortunately, several Nevada ring physicians have recently neglected their responsibility.

In Las Vegas, on June 28, Manny Pacquiao pummeled David Diaz into oblivion. Nobody, not even the ringside physician, Dr. Anthony Ruggeroli (who was working Diaz' corner), called a halt to the bout. By round seven, Diaz had absorbed considerable punishment and was not about to turn things around with a lucky punch. The direction of the fight's flow had clearly demonstrated that Diaz was overmatched. Yet, everyone remained oblivious to the truth until he collapsed onto the canvas in round nine.

Of course, it makes more sense to have the corner rescue their man, but there is no guarantee this will happen. Therefore, the referee and doctor must take matters into their own hands. Moreover, there are times when the referee needs the physician's support to orchestrate a stop at the correct moment.

The doctor should recommend a stoppage under two circumstances: The fighter is at an unfair disadvantage, or if the fighter continues he is at risk of permanent or life-threatening injury. If this was just a medical decision, it would be a simple one, but there are numerous factors that must be taken into consideration.

The physician should know at least as much about the fighters as the television commentators. The boxers are our patients, and it is virtually impossible to make the correct diagnosis without an appropriate history.

Understanding the fighter's record (both amateur and professional), past injuries, and preparation can make a significant difference. All too often, the ring doctor will have little or no knowledge regarding the boxer's training regimen and whether or not they were hurt in the gym or had issues making weight. You can ask these questions at the weigh-in, but for obvious reasons such things are frequently concealed.

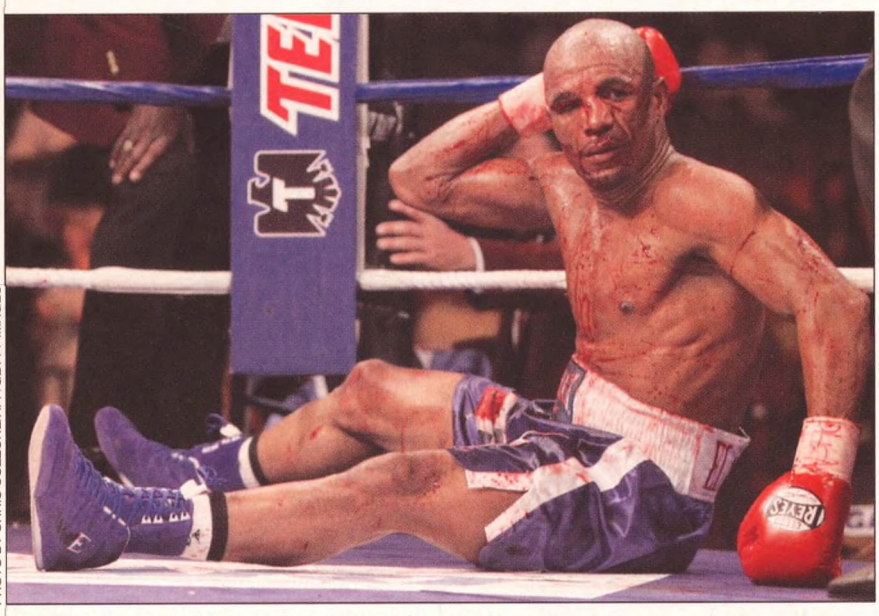

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The bleeding and battered Lorenzo was left to fend for himself

It is also important to be aware of the capabilities and proclivities of the cornermen. Are they related to the fighter, prone to let a fight go on too long, or have little expertise in handling a cut?

According to former Nevada chief physician Dr. Flip Homansky, a ring physician must go beyond practicing medicine.

"Most importantly they must be willing to learn the sport, have compassion, and be ethical," said Homansky.

These are very valid points, but is it the norm in Nevada?

On the undercard of Pacquiao-Diaz, Humberto Soto took on Francisco Lorenzo for the vacant WBC super featherweight title. Following a barrage of punches and two knockdowns, Soto

was disqualified for hitting Lorenzo behind the head while Lorenzo was down. Lorenzo concussed and bleeding from multiple facial orifices was inexplicably left alone without medical attention while referee Joe Cortez, Executive Director Keith Kizer, and ring physician, Dr. David Watson held a lengthy discussion.

If a fighter is hurt and the fight stops, the doctor must remain at the boxer's side until he leaves the ring on his own volition or he is tranported to the hospital. *No discussion!*

Not all ringside medical situations are as clear-cut as the two involving Diaz and Lorenzo. Often the doctor has to make recommendations based on a cut or closing eye. A swollen eye socket is a common ring injury. The doctor must examine the eye *before* it closes shut, or there is no way to make a sound determination. It is absurd to see a ring doctor attempting to pry open a closed eye to check the eyeball. It can't be done.

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Diaz took far more punishment than was necessary

Considerations include whether there has been prior injury, i.e. a detached retina. The doctor must also look for the cause of the orbital swelling, such as a broken nose or an orbital fracture. With the latter, there can be damage to the muscles that move the eyeball and create double vision. If the fighter is able to protect himself, the bout may continue, but if he has been absorbing considerable punishment, the referee and doctor can use the shut eye as an excuse to free the fighter from further harm. This amounts to understanding the fight flow.

I assumed understanding how to deal with a one-eyed fighter was ringside medicine 101, until I watched Alonzo Butler lose a unanimous decision to Friday Ahunanya at the Thomas & Mack Center on June 20.

Butler was scheduled to fight Dominick Guinn in December 2007, but suffered a detached retina in training. He underwent a successful repair, and, following a 13-month absence from the ring, he faced a tough comeback assignment in Ahunanya. By the fifth round, repeated right hands had closed Butler's previously injured right eye. Nevertheless, the fight was allowed to continue despite Butler telling Dr. Ruggeroli he couldn't see. What was the doctor waiting for?

This was in sharp contrast to an excellent job done by Nevada's Dr. James Game. On August 2, at the Palms Hotel and Casino, Joshua Clottey stopped Zab Judah in the ninth round after Judah claimed he couldn't see. The fighter later protested the stoppage, but Dr. Game gave Judah several tests to clarify his eyesight. When Judah failed each, the doctor didn't hesitate to quickly make the appropriate determination.

A fight is seldom stopped on one punch. Normally, the losing boxer is worn down, less able to mount an adequate defense. This is where communication between the ring physician and referee is crucial.

Veteran referee Wayne Kelly has worked his share of high-profile contests. Kelly, a New York native with 18 years experience, notes it is never easy to know when to stop a fight.

"If it is too late, a kid could die. You need to be on target," said Kelly. "In New York, we have top-shelf doctors. We just look at one another and nod heads. Between rounds, I'll go to the corner and do an assessment. The doctor and I will nod at one another without as much as a word."

Kelly says he will step away from the corner and speak to the doctor to make certain they are on the same page. In this way, if the fight should stop in a subsequent round, it will be expected and not contested, because there is an evolving process. This is the right approach medically and professionally.

The bottom line is that a ring physician must work closely with the referee so the right outcome is reached. A good physician is seen little and heard less, but being unable to pull the trigger at the right time makes him a liability to all and endangers the very sport and athletes they are hired to protect. Hopefully, Nevada will regain an understanding of these valued principles and employ only well-trained experienced physicians to protect the boxers who fight there. ■

By Jim Bagg

Happy Baggsgiving, One And All

In baseball, you don't want to get ahead of the curve, since that means you're striking out a lot. But in most other worldly pursuits, being ahead of the curve is a good thing. And Jimbo Baggins is nothing if not ahead of the curve.

The Baggareeno was protesting the war in Vietnam before Muhammad Ali even knew the meaning of the word "quarrel." He was telling everyone that disco sucked a couple of years before the rest of humanity reached that obvious conclusion. He was walking around with holes in his jeans decades before Kurt Cobain made it cool (although that was more out of necessity than choice).

And the Baggarfunkel has always celebrated Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday in October. Why? Because that's what you do when you're ahead of the curve. And because that's what you do if you really, really love turkey, stuffing, and gravy and you can't wait another month for everybody else to get on that turkey, stuffing, and gravy train.

So here we are, it's the Baggsgiving season, which means it's time for the world's premier boxing writer to give thanks. So let's all hold hands around the table, prepare to get sloshed on bourbon (the drink of choice at Baggsgiving), and give thanks for:

Larry Merchant: Thank you to the grand old man of boxing broadcasting for conceiving the Oscar De La

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Merchant's dream became Manny's reality

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Khan assumes a position made famous by British fighters

Hoya-Manny Pacquiao fight. We all thought Larry was crazy, suggesting a year ago that 154-pound Oscar stand toe-to-toe and Adam's apple-to-eyeballs with the then-130-pound Pac-Man, but if it's crazy to suggest a fight that could potentially reel in $100-million, then Merchant is the best kind of crazy there is.

Some folks have criticized this fight, but the Baggosaurus thinks it's just what boxing needs: an event that proves wrong everyone who thought De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather was the last superfight the sport would ever see. A lot of people believe De La Hoya's going to win in a walk; Baggy the Greek is going on record picking the underdog. In any case, thanks for thinking up this fight in that demented mind of yours, Larry. Whatever you've been drinking, the Baggman will have a double.

Breidis Prescott: Thank you to Amir Khan's conqueror for restoring order to the universe. Between Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton, and David Haye, British boxers were shedding their hard-earned reputation as a bunch of losers, and as someone almost old enough to have fired a musket in the Revolutionary War, General Baggington had seen just about enough of boisterous British fans believing their athletes were actually a bunch of winners. Khan was supposed to be the future of the fight game in England, but he didn't make it out of the first minute against Prescott, a tribute to the Colombian's power and to the fact that Khan's chin should have come with a warranty.

It warms the heart to see Britain's best boxers again assuming that horizontal position they made famous. It's too bad the likeable Khan had to be the fall guy, but if that's what it takes to be certain we're living in a world where the sky is still blue, the grass is still green, and the U.S. dollar is still worth a little something, then so be it.

Jorge Barrios' upper lip: The Bagg-a-donuts' couch cushions aren't thankful to "The Hyena's" lip for splitting and spurting blood everywhere, since those cushions are now covered in the Baggalini's puke. But otherwise, that crimson spigot was a beautiful thing, since it spared boxing the disgrace of yet another hometown robbery.

Barrios was having his way with Rocky Juarez, who, as usual, was fighting as if there would be money deducted from his purse for every punch he threw. Through nine rounds, Barrios was in complete control, but referee Rafael Ramos kept the fight close by deducting two points from the Argentine for low blows even though not a single punch drifted below the beltline. Juarez started to heat up and won the 10th—which still left him two points behind on the Baggroscope's scorecard, even after factoring in the two points stolen by the ref. Then, in round 11, Juarez turned Barrios' lip into drapery, and the fight had to be stopped.

Good come-from-behind win by Juarez, right? Wrong. Turns out he wasn't coming from behind. In Juarez' hometown of Houston, Dr. Ruben Garcia had him up 95-93, Ruben Carrion had him ahead 96-92, and Rocky Burke had it even, meaning Juarez was already ahead on two cards through nine rounds despite getting comprehensively outboxed to that point. Between the ref and judges, Barrios needed a shutout to win a split decision. Thankfully, he got a split lip instead and the controversy was muted. But remember when Juarez needed help from a bumbling ref and some questionable judging to beat Zahir Raheem in Houston a few years back? This is officially a trend. It turns out Florida and Ohio aren't the only states that bend the rules to make sure Texans win.

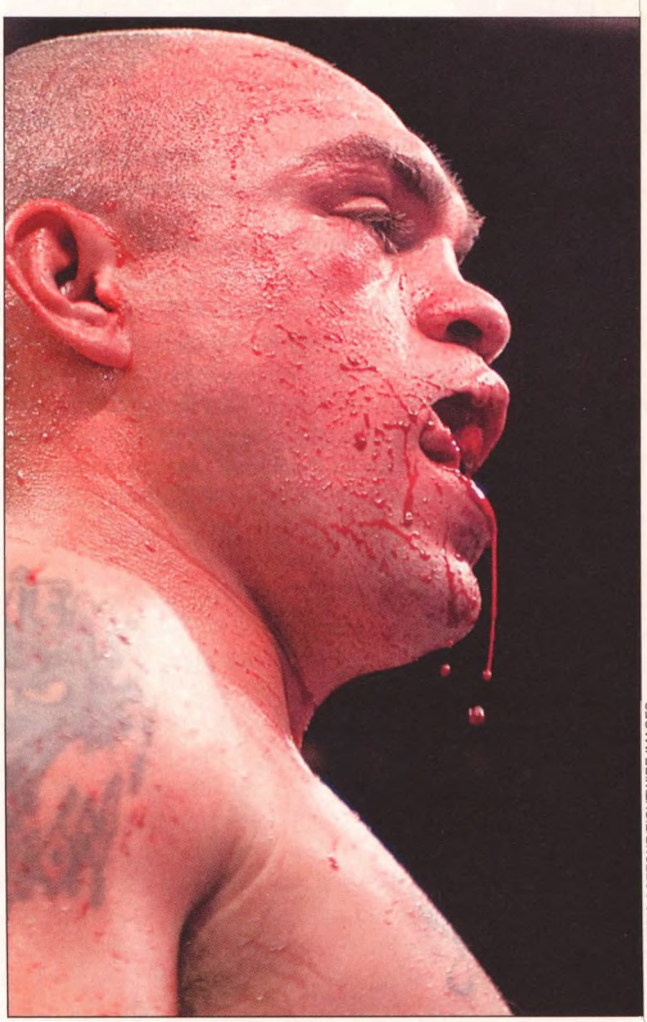

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Barrios' gruesome injury prevented hometown robbery

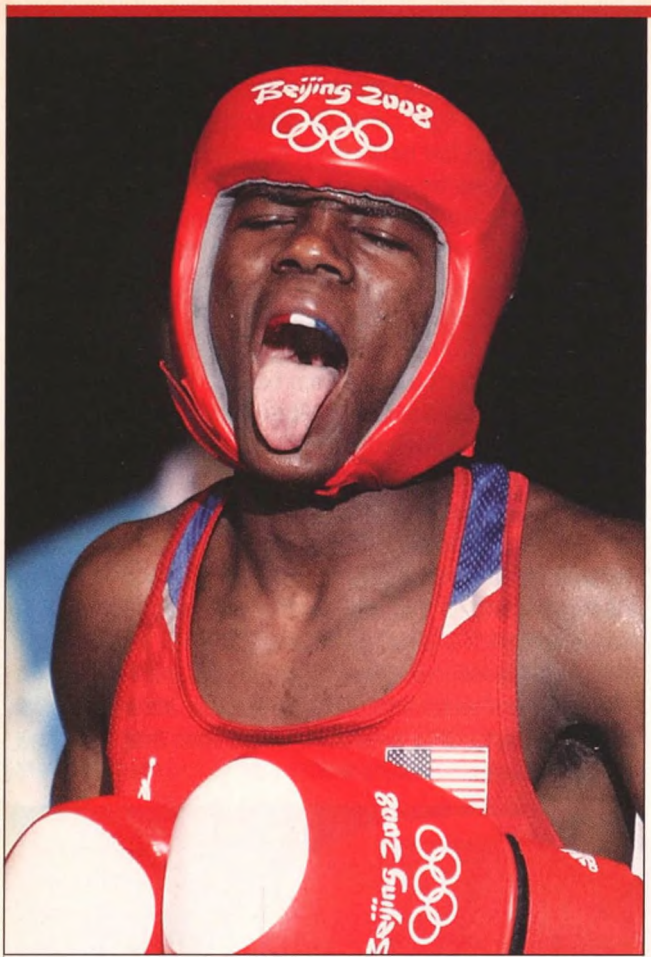

PHOTO BY JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

Raynell Williams' expression sums up Bagg's feelings about Olympic boxing

NBC: The peacock network deserves a major thank you for banishing Olympic boxing to the fringes of cable-TV existence, thus sparing most Americans the agony of watching a version of the sport so boring it makes Ruiz-Oquendo look like Basilio-DeMarco. Could you imagine if NBC showed a big Michael Phelps race in prime time, followed by some slapfest/hugfest of a boxing match that ends in a decision victory for the fighter who got outfought? We don't need millions upon millions of people being turned off to boxing for life and thinking the amateur game is in any way representative of the pro version.

While the Olympics were going on, *Friday Night Fights* had the likes of Howard Davis Jr. and Michael Spinks in studio, and ESPN2 showed extended clips of their fights from the '76 games. Now *that* was amateur boxing. No headgear, tons of action, knockdowns, knockouts, drama. What we're left with now isn't boxing. And thanks to NBC, the fact that it sucks can mostly be our little secret.

The Contender: You all know the Baggtasmatron doesn't dig reality TV, and *The Contender* got old faster than Jake LaMotta's stand-up act. But you can't deny that the show has succeeded as an assembly line for solid, name opponents who have enriched the boxing landscape the last couple of years. From guys like Peter Manfredo, Sergio Mora, and Steve Forbes all the way down to Anthony Bonsante and Cornelius Bundrage, they're not superstars, but they have name value and they fit in nicely anywhere from ESPN to HBO. They've created depth from 140 to 168 pounds, and every promoter out there owes Jeff Wald and his gang some gratitude for increasing the field of recognizable foes to choose from.

Plus, the Bagginator must thank Bonsante, specifically, for the comic relief he provided in August with his "I'm out cold ... just kidding!" routine against Adonis Stevenson. Watching the "#1 Dad" spaz out when the ref stopped the fight was delightful. And it was refreshing to watch someone go from "I'm sleeping" to "I'm awake" so quickly, when the Baggster's memories of his married days mostly involved his wives going from "I'm awake" to "I'm sleeping" when he climbed into bed.

Lennox Lewis: This column started with an HBO commentator, and it'll finish with another. Thank you, Lennox, for giving hope to people all around the world who are impossibly bad at their jobs.

Can someone remind the Bagguccino again why Ross Greenburg was so quick to try to run Merchant out of town and yet Lewis has been granted immunity?

Dreaming Small

All credit to Cristian Mijares and Vic Darchinyan for agreeing to make a compelling fight, and to Showtime for being the one pay-cable network left with an interest in fights that benefit the hardcore fans, but the Baggai Lama is going to play the Grinch here a little bit. In announcing

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

You can't leave Montiel out of the championship equation

The Monthly Mailbagg

How lame were most of the e-mails submitted this month? See below for the least lame of the bunch and that'll give you an idea. Come on, people, I'm looking for original comments or compelling questions here. Pull your useless brains away from the new 90210 *for a minute and ensure that the next Mailbagg is filled with better material than this:*

Dear Mr. Bagg,

I am writing from the big boxing nation Austria. You may know our last great boxer Harald Geier (alias "E.T."), who lost his first and only world championship fight (WBO) against Daniel Jimenez after 17 seconds in the first round.

The reason why I am actually writing is that I want you to know that after a long time of consideration, your column finally convinced me to subscribe to THE RING. Your articles are the final touch in an already great magazine, or the cream of the crop, if you know what I mean.

That's all for now, 'cause I don't want to waste your valuable time.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,
Martin

Marty,

If you think the Baggarooney's time is valuable, then you really don't know him all that well. And if you're subscribing to THE RING because of "Hitting On The Break" ... well, that just means you have great taste. And if all Austrians have such good taste, then it explains why Schwarzenegger came over here to make crappy movies and run for public office.

Sadly, if Harald "E.T." Geier is the best boxer your country can produce, that places you somewhere between Singapore and Djibouti in the all-time boxing rankings. Did you know that of Geier's 33 career victories, only four came against opponents with winning records? Geez, even Faruq Saleem was matched tougher than that.

At least E.T. retired from boxing at the age of 25, so he could get back to racing bicycles in the sky with Elliott.

the signing of the fight for November 1, ESPN.com's headline called it a "dream junior bantamweight title fight." Can the person who wrote that headline please report directly to an Overhypers Anonymous meeting?

Mijares-Darchinyan is a good little fight, but Mijares vs. Fernando Montiel, a tossup fight that would actually determine who's the best 115-pounder on the planet, is the one and only junior bantamweight "dream fight." Mijares-Darchinyan is a decent clash of styles, but is there anyone who doesn't expect the Mexican to box "The Raging Bull" into a knot? Mijares is ridiculously slick and a top-10 pound-for-pounder; Darchinyan is a tough guy with a big punch who got embarrassed by Nonito Donaire the last time he fought someone half as skillful as Mijares.

Nothing against Mijares-Darchinyan. The Baggopotamus is happier to have it than most of the schlock that Showtime could have gone with. But the word "dream" apparently doesn't mean what it used to. (And the Baggenberry blames Dusty Rhodes for devaluing it by thinking a 300-pound tub of goo could label himself "The American Dream.")

And The Stingray Goes To ...

A man very much in the running for a Lifetime Achievement Stingray Award, Zuri Lawrence, the incredible heavyweight freak of nature who has somehow made it 43 pro fights without ever knocking out an opponent. So this month, let's call it the Ray Award. (For you dopes who need your jokes explained to you, what the Bagglagio is saying is that he's a Stingray with no sting. Get it? Of course you didn't.)

Skilled 38-year-old journeyman Lawrence, who has already scored wins over the likes of 19-1-1 King Ipitan, 11-0 Paolo Vidoz, and 32-5-3 Jameel McCline, can now add Albert Sosnowski and his 43-1 (26) record to his resume. Lawrence was just 23-14-4 coming in—and in case you missed it the first time, he has *zero knockouts!*—but he was too quick and clever for the overprotected Sosnowski, and he won all eight rounds of the fight on all three scorecards.

Frankly, the scoring was probably a bit unfair to Sosnowski, who seemed to the Baggaboo's eyes to have won at least a round or two. But that's nitpicking. All that matters is that the chump with the glossy record lost to the guy who, on paper, looked like easy pickings. And that's what the Stingray Award is all about. (And the Ray Award too.) ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

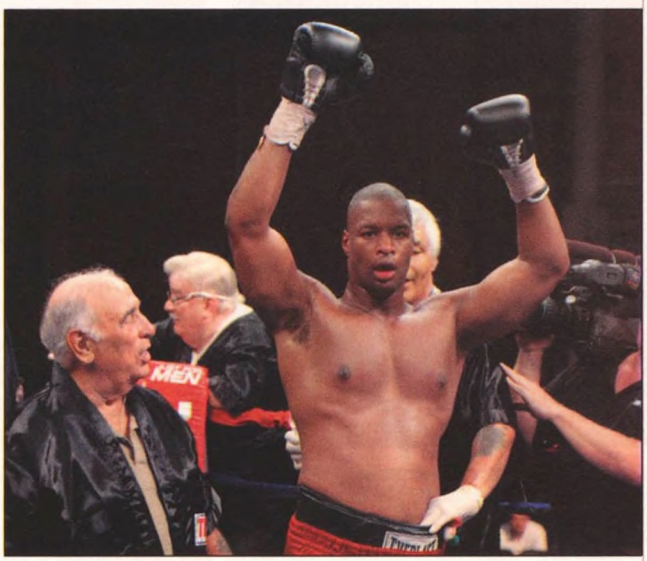

PHOTO BY JIM EVERETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Lawrence celebrates his latest upset victory

Come Out Writing

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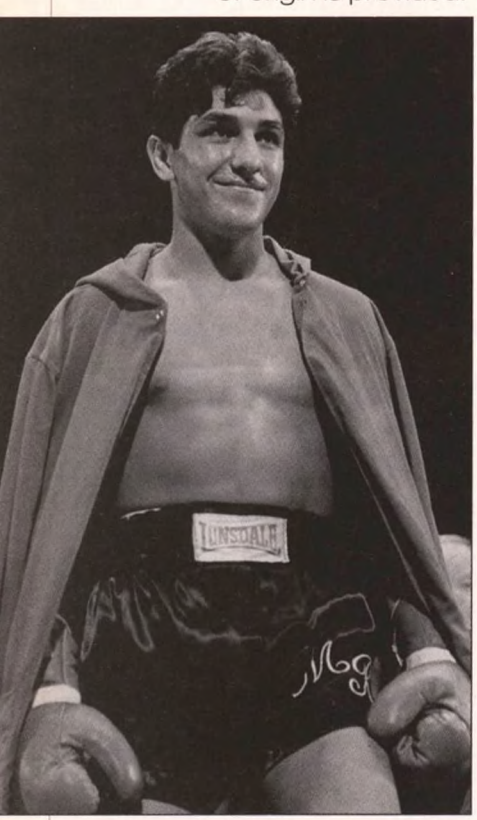

Mando Ramos as he looked entering the ring the night he won the lightweight title from Teo Cruz in 1968. Reader Ned Byrne was among the many who wrote to express their admiration for Ramos, who died in early-July.

Remembering Ramos

Thanks for the tribute to Mando Ramos in the October 2008 issue. Back in the late-1960s, I used to watch boxing from the Olympic Auditorium on Saturday nights and saw Mando fight. He always gave the fans their money's worth.

NED BYRNE
Weymouth, MA

Comic Relief

The horrible showing of the U.S. boxing team at the Beijing Olympics was partially offset for me by the hilarious segment that Teddy Atlas and Bob Papa did before each American fighter was introduced. Just like he does every week on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, Teddy did his usual acting out of what he thinks each boxer needs to do to get the victory.

The comical aspect of the segment was Papa, who apparently hasn't spent much time working out in a gym to get first-hand knowledge of the sport. Bob spent his time prancing around the ring trying to imitate a fighter, while flinching at Teddy's mock punches and returning his own along with some high-pitched sound effects. Those segments were the only bright part of an otherwise bland and disappointing tournament.

BURRIS EVAN
burris.evan@yahoo.com

Winning And Losing

Oscar De La Hoya should be ashamed of himself for choosing to fight a lightweight. He says he wants Manny Pacquiao because Freddie Roach was "disrespectful." Antonio Margarito's people have been more disrespectful than Roach, so why not fight Margarito? If Oscar fights anybody three divisions lighter, he loses regardless of the outcome. If he fights the toughest fighter in his own division, he wins regardless of the outcome. Sugar Ray Leonard didn't become a legend by fighting Salvador Sanchez!

VICTOR RIVERO
Vicrivero22@yahoo.com

A Vote For Marquez

I wish we (boxing fans) could vote for the Fighter of the Year. If we did, most fans would choose Juan Manuel Marquez. True, he lost to Manny Pacquiao via highly controversial split decision, a verdict many felt belonged to Marquez, but then moved up to lightweight and knocked out lightweight king Joel Casamayor. I hope Juan Manuel will get a third fight with Pacquiao.

SAMMY AL SAIDI
Dearborn, MI

Khan Job

So we finally know what Amir Khan is made of—glass. This is the guy who called the lightweight division weak, *after* Pacquiao moved in and settled there. I watched Khan's match with Breidis Prescott on pay-per-view, and 20 seconds and three punches after the opening bell, I realized I'd just paid £15 to see an Olympic silver medalist get bulldozed by a guy no one has ever heard of.

Khan has been over-hyped and over-priced. The next time Frank Warren puts him on PPV, he should at least wear a mask.

ALEX PRESCOTT
awkwordz@indeedweare.com

A Change For The Better

I enjoyed reading "10 Moments That Changed Boxing" by Gavin Evans in the October 2008 issue of THE RING. In following up on that, I hope that all of your readers contact their U.S. Senators and Congressional representative and ask them to vote for the passage of the Professional Boxing Amendments Act of 2007(S. 84/H.R. 4031). If the act becomes law, then boxing will undoubtedly

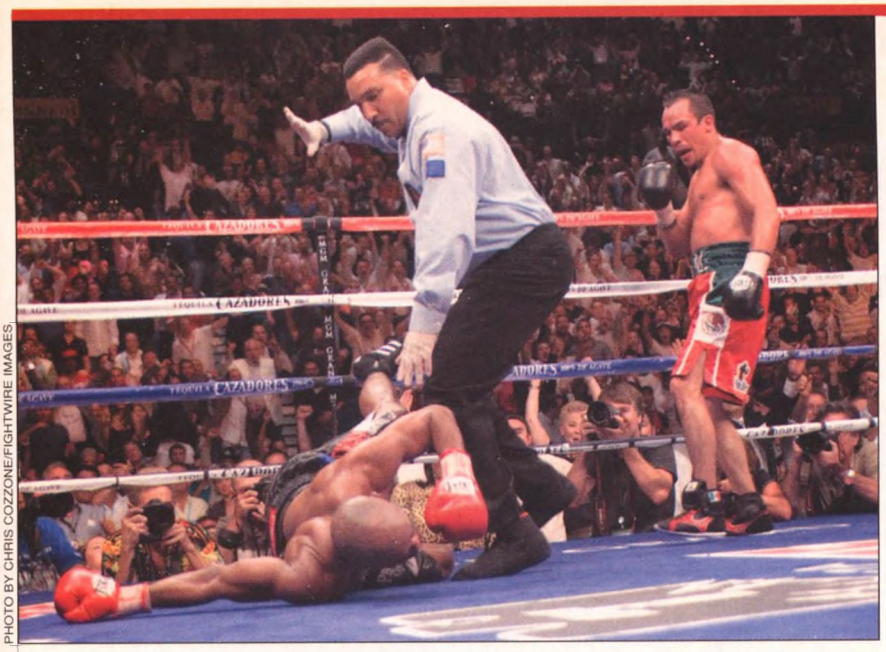

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Juan Manuel Marquez stops Joel Casamayor to win the world lightweight championship. Reader Sammy Al Saidi strongly believes that Marquez should be 2008's Fighter of the Year.

change for the better in terms of safety, pensions, and rankings.

GEORGE OTTO
Youngstown, OH

Editor's note: The letter writer is chief counsel for the Association for the Improvement of Boxing/The Jerry Quarry Foundation For Pugilistica Dementia.

Bow Out, B-Hop

I really wish Bernard Hopkins would retire. It is a shame to see such a great talent damage his reputation by seeking that final upset win. In the past I have cringed at some of his comments and actions, but I have always admitted his superb boxing skills. In my opinion, it is irrelevant whether or not Hopkins was the true winner in the fight with Joe Calzaghe. It was the manner he chose to fight that annoyed the fans. He made the decision to attempt to steal every round by throwing single punches, and that is unacceptable.

With his age increasing, skills diminishing, and body failing him, is it really wise for Hopkins to get in the ring with Kelly Pavlik? The sad thing about this fight is that it is no longer about proving his ability or sealing his legacy. This fight may just be about defeating the aging warrior for Pavlik, but for Hopkins it is about regaining the respect he has lost.

Please make this your last fight, B-Hop.

DUNCAN ANDERSON
Ayr, Scotland

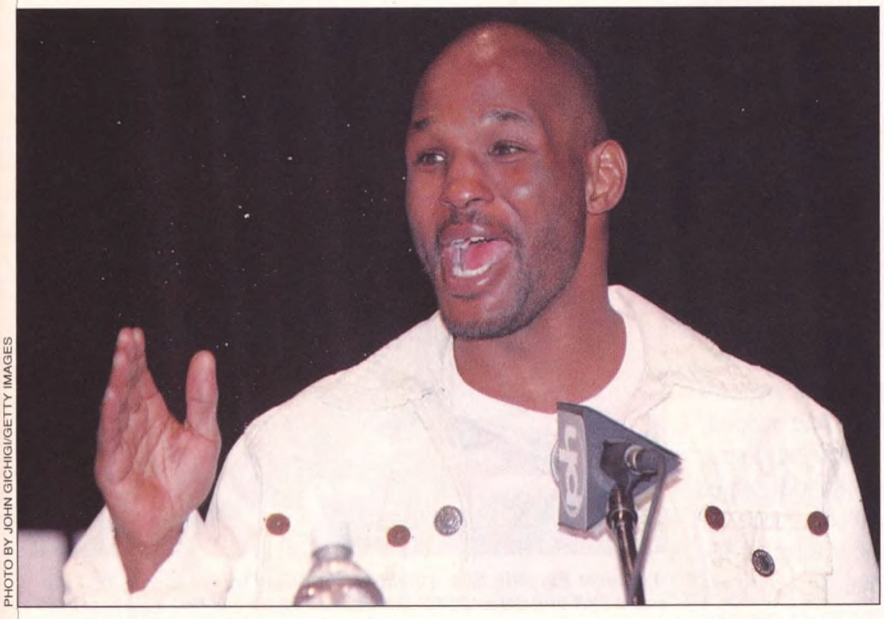

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Bernard Hopkins is never at a loss for words, but reader Duncan Anderson thinks "The Executioner's" best days are behind him and that he should retire following his fight with Kelly Pavlik.

A Difference That Matters

In THE RING's article about Chris Arreola ("An Exciting, Talented, American Heavyweight") in the October '08 issue, Arreola says he aims to be the first Mexican-American heavyweight champion. Wasn't John Ruiz the first Latino heavyweight titleholder when he beat Evander Holyfield for the WBA belt in 2001? Or, did Arreola mean the first RING magazine champion, as Ruiz was by no mean the true champion?

VASILI VOLKOFF
Amelia, VA

Editor's note: Arreola phrased his goal correctly, as he would be the first "Mexican-American" to win a heavyweight title. Ruiz is of Puerto Rican heritage. ■

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By Eric Raskin

The Right (Handed) Opponent For Klitschko?

The days of **Wladimir Klitschko** being able to get away with a "win this one, look good next time" approach are waning. After back-to-back uninspiring victories over **Sultan Ibragimov** and **Tony Thompson**, the number-one heavyweight in the world is overdue to do a little inspiring.

Whether that will happen depends largely on Klitschko. But it also depends to some degree on his opponent, and in Klitschko's defense, Ibragimov and Thompson were both southpaws with box-first mentalities. On December 13, he has an excellent opportunity to get back on the right track when he defends the WBO and IBF belts against **Alexander Povetkin**, an orthodox fighter who comes straight forward and doesn't place a whole lot of emphasis on defense.

"I'm looking forward to fighting Povetkin," Klitschko told a group of reporters in New York recently. "He's young, an Olympic champion ... And he's not a southpaw."

Those are all true statements about Russia's 2004 Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist who, at 29, is indeed young for a heavyweight. He also has been moved quickly by today's standards. Less than a year into his pro career, Povetkin began fighting credible trialhorses like **Friday Ahunanya**, **Ed Mahone**, and **David Bostice**, and two years after turning pro, he shut out **Larry Donald** over 10 rounds. He followed that by winning a four-man elimination tournament for a mandatory-challenger position, TKO-ing **Chris Byrd** and rallying from a slow start to hand **Eddie Chambers** his first defeat. And instead of sitting on his ranking, Povetkin kept busy and wiped out **Taurus Sykes** in four rounds in July.

But with just 16 pro fights on his resume, could Povetkin possibly be ready for Klitschko, a veteran of 54 paid appearances? And perhaps more troubling to him than the experience gap, how will Povetkin get inside and do what he did so effectively against smaller men like Chambers and Byrd if the 6'6" Klitschko's jab is pumping persistently?

Even if Povetkin is a big underdog, and even if it seems like he's being rushed into this fight, it's a great opportunity for him for two reasons. First, we know Klitschko is vulnerable if hit hard, and Povetkin is a solid puncher. And second, Povetkin will earn nearly $3.3-million for the fight, an astronomical sum for a fighter without an established name. Klitschko's promotional company, K2 Promotions, made an oversized purse bid of $13,130,130 to stage the fight—$5-million more than was required to outbid Povetkin's promoter, Sauerland Event—and Povetkin is entitled to 25 percent of that. And yes, that means Klitschko will pocket just shy of $10-million, not bad for a fight he's expected to win.

The fight will take place in Germany (the specific site was still uncertain as of press time) and HBO will televise it in the States in conjunction with a replay of **Oscar De La Hoya** vs. **Manny Pacquiao**.

Listen Up

It appears the wheels are in motion for an **Antonio Margarito-Miguel Cotto** rematch in June 2009. Both are expected to fight by February (possibly on the same HBO broadcast from different venues, with Margarito on the west coast and Cotto in Puerto Rico), with Margarito-Cotto II to follow if both win ... Here are a handful of undercard updates: **Andreas Kotelnik** is scheduled to defend his junior welterweight alphabet belt against **Dimitry Salita** on the November 8 **Joe Calzaghe-Roy Jones** PPV undercard; super middleweight prospect **Danny "The Golden Child" Jacobs** may fight on HBO in the co-feature to **Ricky Hatton** vs. **Paulie Malignaggi** on November 22; and top bantamweight prospect **Abner Mares** is likely to appear in one of the televised bouts underneath De La Hoya-Pacquiao on December 6 ... As of press time, Showtime was discussing the possibility of putting some of the money it saved on the canceled **Nate Campbell-Joan Guzman** fight toward a **Kendall Holt-Ricardo Torres** rubber match on December 5, the night before De La Hoya-Pacquiao. If it's anything like their second fight, we may just end up thanking Guzman for his unprofessional behavior when all is said and done. ■

PHOTO BY JENS-ULRICH KOCH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Alexander Povetkin fires a right at Chris Byrd on his way to an 11th-round TKO in October 2007. The Russian had a two-inch height advantage over Byrd, but will give away four inches to Wladmir Klitschko for their December fight.

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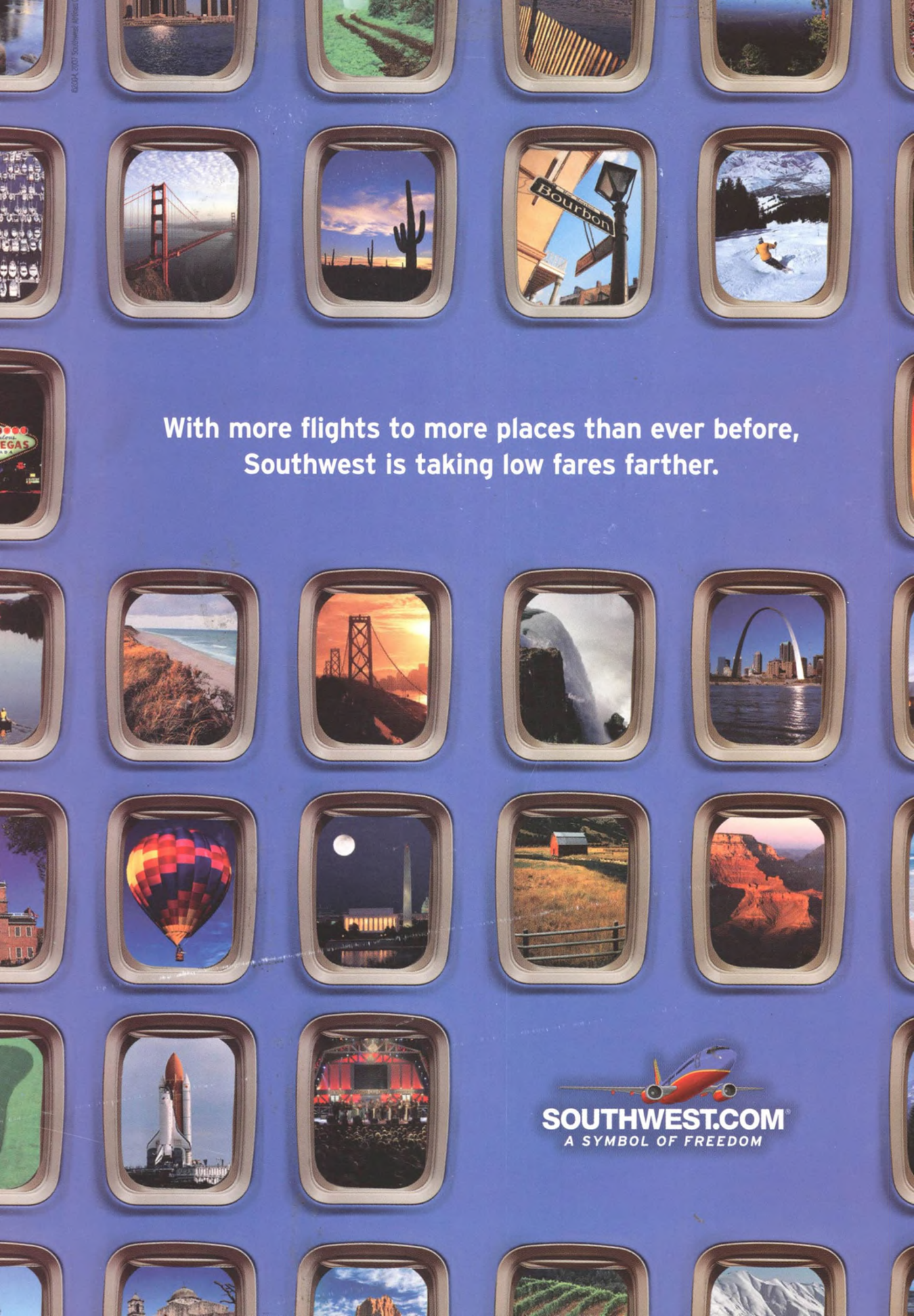
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